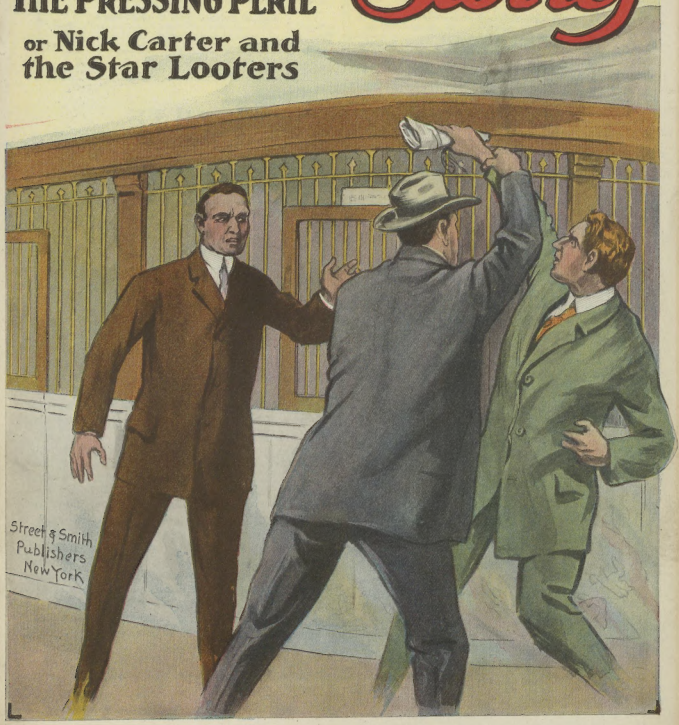
No. 139 MAY 8, 1915 5 CENTS

Nick Carter Stories

THE PRESSING PERIL

or Nick Carter and the Star Looters



NICK CARTER STORIES

Issued Weekly. Entered as Second-class Matter at the New York Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *79-89 Seventh Ave., New York.*
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No. 139. NEW YORK, May 8, 1915. **Price Five Cents.**

THE PRESSING PERIL;

Or, NICK CARTER AND THE STAR LOOTERS.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE WOMAN WHO VANISHED.

"Oh, I say, old top!"

Nick Carter stopped short and looked at the speaker.

There was no mistaking his nationality.

He was English to the bone. English in aspect, attitude, attire, and accent. English of the most pronounced and impressive type—but impressive upon as keen and thoroughbred an American observer as the famous New York detective chiefly because of the insipid and mildly obtrusive aristocracy that stuck out all over him.

He was tall and slender. He wore a suit of pronounced plaid. He was about twenty-three years old, with yellow hair and the fair skin of a straight-bred Anglo-Saxon. He wore a monocle with a cord dangling from it, and through which one watery blue eye glared larger and brighter than the other.

He had been hurrying up Fifth Avenue for about five minutes in a sort of subdued and desperate agitation, threading his way quite rudely through the stream of pedestrians always in that fashionable thoroughfare shortly before six on a pleasant October afternoon, and he incidentally had overtaken Nick Carter near the corner of Fifty-ninth Street.

He did not accost the detective because he knew him, or had the slightest idea of his vocation. It was purely by chance that he had appealed to the man he most needed. He obeyed a sudden, irrepressible impulse, that of one who scarce knew what else to do, when he grasped Nick's arm and stopped him, exclaiming apologetically:

"Oh, I say, old top!"

Nick sized him up with a glance. He saw more than others would have seen, that this stranger not only was deeply disturbed, but also in doubt what course to pursue. Nick merely said, nevertheless, tentatively:

"Well?"

The other responded with a forward thrust of his head, a more appealing scrutiny, and with native accent and characteristics that no attempt will be made to even suggest on paper.

"You'll pardon a chap, old top, won't you? I'm in a bally bad mess, so I am, and jolly well upset. Would you tell me where I could find an inspector—what your blooming people call a detective? I don't want any gumshoe bobbie, don't you know, but a ripping roarer who knows his beastly business and can keep his mouth closed. You see, old top——"

"What's the trouble, young man?" Nick interposed. "I may be able to aid you, or advise you. I am a detective—what your blooming English people call an inspector."

The subtle retort in the last was wasted upon his hearer. He gazed more sharply at Nick through his monocle, nevertheless, saying quickly:

"That's blasted lucky, then, don't you know? I can't account for it, 'pon my word, this running bunk against a man I wanted. What name, sir, may I ask?"

"My name is Nick Carter," replied the detective indifferently. "But what——"

"There it is again!" exclaimed the Englishman, in-

terrupting with countenance lighting. "This is a blooming, blasted good wheeze. I've heard of you, sir. You're bally well known by name even in old Lunnon. I'm deuced well pleased, Mr. Carter, so I am."

He seemed to have temporarily forgotten his trouble, in his surprise and pleasure upon discovering the detective's identity. He even smiled and extended his hand, which was accepted and shaken in a perfunctory way.

Nick saw plainly, in fact, that the young man really was instinctively very frank and genuine, and that under his somewhat insipid and superficial personality he was possessed of true manly sentiments and probably some depth of character.

That he was a well-bred gentleman was equally manifest, moreover, and Nick was impelled to assist him, if possible. He brought him to the point at once, nevertheless, by replying:

"Granting all that, young man, what is your trouble? Why do you need a detective?"

"Because I'm blasted hard hit, don't you know?" he replied, serious again. "I've been jolly well robbed."

"Robbed of what?"

"My wife, sir."

"Robbed of your wife?" questioned Nick, surprised and almost inclined to laugh.

"That's the blooming truth, Mr. Carter, or how it looks to me. I'm as hard hit as if I'd got a jolly bash on the beak. She's a bally American girl, is Mollie, and——"

"Stop a moment," Nick interrupted again. "My time is valuable. I cannot listen to your digressions. Answer my questions briefly and to the point. I then may be able to aid you, if there is any real occasion."

"That's deuced kind, old top, on my word. If——"

"When did you lose your wife, and where?" Nick cut in a bit sharply.

"I didn't lose her. She was jolly well stolen; I'm sure of that."

"Where and when? By whom?"

"Blast it, how can I tell?" protested the Englishman, with wagging head. "We were walking down the avenue, Mollie and I, don't you know? A limousine shot by us, heading uptown. I heard it come to a blooming quick stop. A chauffeur came running back, a bally hounder in bottle-green livery. He tipped his lid, respectfullike, and said as how his fare had caught sight of Mollie when passing us and wanted to speak to her."

"His fare, eh? He was the driver of a taxicab, then?" put in Nick inquiringly.

"I reckon that's right, sir, but I won't be cock-sure."

"What more did he say?"

"Mollie asked the name of his fare, but he could not tell her. He said she had sent him to say a friend wanted to speak to her."

"His passenger was a woman, then?"

"I'm jolly well sure of that. I saw her hat and veil through the window."

"The taxicab must, then, have stopped quite near you," said Nick.

"A matter of thirty yards, sir, not more."

"Your wife went to see who was in the conveyance?"

"That's precisely what she did," nodded the Englishman. "Wait here, Archie, she said, and I'll return in a moment. I was jolly well surprised, don't you know, but what else could I do?"

"Nothing at all, perhaps."

"I always do what Mollie says. She hurried to the taxicab and stuck her head through the door. She shook hands with some one, too, as well as I could tell. Then the bally chauffeur shoved her into the car, or so it looked to me, and bounded to his seat and drove away at top speed. Dash it, what d'ye think of that?"

"What did you think of it?" Nick inquired.

"I was so beastly hard hit I couldn't think," cried the Englishman. "I chased after the bally cab as fast as possible, hoping it would stop and let Mollie down, but it sped out of sight into the park, and here I am. I'm deuced well convinced there's something wrong. Mollie wouldn't bolt off in that fashion. She's above serving me a scurvy trick. She——"

"One moment," Nick again interposed. "You feel quite sure, you say, that you saw the chauffeur force your wife into the cab?"

"It looked jolly well like it, Mr. Carter."

"Did you hear her speak, or utter a cry?"

"I did not, sir."

"Were there other persons near the taxicab at the time?"

"None nearer than I, sir, nor quite as near. I ran after it as fast as I could. I felt cock-sure, even then, it was a beastly job of some kind."

"Do you know of any reason for which your wife might be abducted?" Nick asked, more gravely.

"No, no reason at all, Mr. Carter. There can't be any reason."

"And you know of no person who might have designs upon her?"

"I do not," said the Englishman, with a groan at the mere suggestion. "What designs could one have? Mollie is my wife. She thinks the world of me. She's true-blue and deucedly clever and self-reliant. She——"

"Wait!" said Nick, checking him again. "You are English, I judge."

"Yes, of course."

"And your wife is an American girl?"

"She is, sir, and none better."

"Do you reside here in the city?"

"We are here only for a time. We are boarding in Fifty-third Street, near the avenue."

"Let's walk that way," said Nick. "It's barely possible that your wife will have been dropped at the boarding house before we reach it. How long before you appealed to me did this incident occur?"

"Not more than three or four minutes. We were about three blocks below here."

Nick remembered having seen a taxicab speeding up the avenue noticeably faster than usual at about that time. He had not observed it particularly, however, nor could he recall anything distinctive about it.

There were other reasons than that, moreover, for the interest he was taking in this stranger. He regarded the episode quite as seriously as the young Englishman himself. He knew much better than the other what daring and audacious crimes are committed in New York, and he began to suspect that this might be one of them.

Nick had decided to look at least a little deeper into the matter, therefore, and it was with that object in view

that he suggested going to the Englishman's lodging house, which was only a few blocks south of where the two men had met.

Nick continued to question him while they walked briskly down the avenue.

"How long have you been in New York?" he inquired.

"I have been here only two weeks, Mr. Carter, this time," was the reply.

"Your second visit?"

'Yes. I was here about two months ago for the first time. I have been out in the bally Cripple Creek country to invest in some mines. Deucedly rough section, old top, with a beastly lot of bally bounders, but they dig out a jolly quantity of rich ore. 'Pon my word, I——"

"You are a man of means, then, I infer," put in Nick.

"Well, I have a bit of a fortune in my own name."

"By the way, speaking of that, what is your name?" Nick pointedly inquired.

The Englishman hesitated for half a second. Most men would not have noticed it. Nick was quick to detect it, suspecting deception, however, as well as some secret occasion for it.

"My name is Archie Waldron."

"Archie Waldron, eh?"

"Yes. I am English, you know, as you remarked, though I'm jolly well puzzled as to how you discovered it."

Nick did not inform him. Instead, as they turned into Fifty-third Street and approached the boarding house occupied by the Englishman, he inquired, more earnestly:

"Where had you been with your wife, or where were you going, Mr. Waldron, when this strange separation occurred?"

A tinge of red appeared in the Englishman's cheeks. He appeared somewhat embarrassed. He gazed at Nick for a moment, then said:

"We went out for a bit of a walk, Mr. Carter. It's deuced tiresome, you know, sitting around a bally boarding house. Here we are, too, and——"

"Wait one moment," Nick interrupted, as they arrived at the steps of the house. "I have something to say to you, Mr. Waldron."

"Glad of it, old top, on my word. What is it?"

"You already anticipate it," Nick replied impressively. "I can read that in your face. Now, young man, this matter may be even more serious than you really think. I have no idea that we shall find your wife here. There is no telling when she will return, by whom she was carried away, or how she can be traced and the truth discovered—unless you tell me the truth."

"But——"

"Your name is not Archie Waldron. You did not come out merely for a walk with your wife. You were going, or had been somewhere, with a definite object in view, and that possibly may have some bearing upon what followed."

"'Pon my word, sir——"

"Oh, there is nothing to it," Nick insisted. "I mean just what I say. You will be perfectly safe, Mr. Waldron, in frankly confiding in me. You must do so, too, or I shall drop this matter immediately. Under no other conditions will I enter this house."

CHAPTER II.

DOWN TO CASES.

Nick Carter had a way of making himself felt under such circumstances. His impressive remarks were immediately effective. The Englishman turned even more pale and grave, gazing apprehensively at the detective, while he replied, with agitated voice:

"You're deucedly well right. I'd be a blooming idiot, Mr. Carter, if I couldn't see that. Come into the house, sir, and I'll tell you the whole beastly business. Your word is as good as a Bank of England note, sir, and I'll keep nothing from you."

"You have decided wisely," said Nick, while they mounted the steps. "In so far as the circumstances permit, I shall consider your disclosure strictly confidential."

"That's mighty kind, sir, and I'll pay you handsomely."

"Payment is an afterconsideration. I will accept no more than my services warrant."

"You're deucedly clever, old top, and I'm proud to know you. Some jolly good fairy must have sent you my way in an hour of need. Come up to my room, sir."

The Englishman had opened the door with a latchkey, and he now led the way to an attractively furnished room on the second floor.

Among the first articles to catch Nick's eye, amid other evidence of feminine taste and sentiment, were two artistic photographs on the mantel. One was a likeness of his companion.

The other was that of a very beautiful girl still under twenty, a face that reflected culture and vivacity, and the winsome features and expression of which, with the finely poised head and shapely shoulders, might have been the ideal of a Raphael or Correggio.

Nick at once inferred rightly that this was the girl who apparently had been spirited away so boldly, as well as mysteriously, in so far as a motive had yet appeared.

The young Englishman looked disappointed when Nick's prediction was verified, his wife not being found there, and he at once waved the detective to a chair, saying with nervous haste and in his own peculiar fashion, which was much less frivolous than appears:

"You were jolly well right, Mr. Carter, and I'm confoundedly upset. What the devil can a poor chap do? I'm going to tell you all about it. How the dickens did you know, old top, that my name isn't Archie Waldron?"

"Because you hesitated when I questioned you," said Nick. "No man would shrink from stating his true name under such circumstances."

"Dash it! that was blasted clever, don't you know? I was a fall guy not to think of that. But you hit the bally nail on the nob. My name is not Waldron, 'pon my honor. I'm the fifth son of the Earl of Eggleston, and an only son by his second wife, the late Countess of Waldmere, from whom I got my title and a bally bit of a fortune. She died when I was born, and I became Lord Waldmere."

"I suspected something of the kind," Nick replied. "I had that I sized you up correctly."

"Did you really, now? Well, that's deuced kind and clever, 'pon my word. What's to be done, my dear fellow? We can't stay here, old top, while Mollie——"

"Now, Lord Waldmere, you're talking," Nick interrupted. "We must get down to rock-bottom as quickly as possible. You must leave me to determine what shall be done. I know more about New York and its devilry than you could possibly imagine."

"That's jolly well right, sir, of course."

"All I require of you, Waldmere, is to tell me a straight story, as briefly as possible." Nick added familiarly. "What are you doing over here? Who was your American wife? Why are you living under an assumed name in a New York boarding house? Tell me all about it with as few words as possible."

Nick then obtained a straight story, in so far as the essential facts were concerned, but not without comments and digressions, from which Lord Waldmere appeared utterly unable to refrain, and which divested his story of anything like desirable brevity.

Briefly stated, however, it appeared that his young lordship, who in most respects was a worthy representative of one of the wealthy and most conservative families of the English aristocracy, had fallen deeply in love with a beautiful American chorus girl about three months before, who then was one of an American opera company singing in London.

In spite of the violent opposition and threats of his father, Lord Waldmere had married the girl, one Mary Royal, then only nineteen, but a girl of remarkable beauty and many accomplishments, and of unblemished and enviable reputation.

What followed was in line with the old, old story. His lordship was promptly disowned and disinherited. He at once left England and came to America with his bride, already having small interests in several Colorado mines, and bent upon investing in others a part of his personal fortune, which amounted to something like fifty thousand pounds, then tied up in English securities and mortgages.

Lord Waldmere had remained only ten days in New York after his arrival. He then went to Colorado with his wife to investigate various mining properties, concerning which he already was partly informed, and in which he anticipated investing quite heavily.

Lack of ready money, however, and his inability to realize immediately upon his home investments, had led him to take an unusual step, one taken upon the suggestion and advice of his wife, pending receipt of funds from a London agent.

Lord Waldmere had, in fact, raised ten thousand dollars by placing in pawn with the Imperial Loan Company his wife's valuable jewels, given to her before her marriage, and valued at about thirty thousand dollars. This not only had been done upon his wife's suggestion, but she also had made the deal and conducted the entire transaction, having had far more experience and being of a much more practical business mind than her husband himself. All of this money had since been invested in Colorado.

Returning to New York a week before, Waldmere then communicated by cable with his London agent, who, during the interval, had converted some of his lordship's property into cash, and drafts were immediately sent him more than doubly sufficient to redeem the pledged jewels.

These funds had arrived that afternoon and were immediately placed on deposit. A little later Waldmere went with his wife to the office of the Imperial Loan Company to redeem the jewels, arriving there soon after five o'clock.

They were told, however, that the jewels were in a time-lock vault that had just been closed for the day, and which could not be opened until nine o'clock the following morning, when the jewels could be redeemed and the transaction ended.

This was perfectly satisfactory under the circumstances, of course, and Lady Waldmere promised to call with her husband the following morning. It was while they were returning to the boarding house, however, that they were separated in the extraordinary manner described.

Such was his lordship's story, told in his own peculiar way, and to which Nick Carter very attentively listened. It revealed the truth in so far as Waldmere could reveal it—but it by no means explained the disappearance of her ladyship, the beautiful American chorus girl for whom Waldmere had lost his heart and sacrificed his prestige.

Nick smiled somewhat significantly when the Englishman had finished. He glanced at the photograph on the mantel, remarking agreeably:

"Well, well, Waldmere, you were hard hit indeed by the pretty American girl. In view of the incentive to many of our international marriages, your conduct is really quite refreshing. I rather like you for it. That is a photograph of Lady Waldmere, I infer."

"Yes, taken in London," bowed Waldmere, evidently deeply pleased with the detective's comments.

"A very beautiful girl, indeed."

"She jolly well is, Mr. Carter, and worthy of——"

"Of all your devotion, Waldmere, no doubt," Nick familiarly interrupted. "But we must not drift away from the matter. We must get onto our job and stick to it, or valuable time may be lost."

"I agree with you."

"None of the circumstances you have stated seem to present, on the surface at least, any reasonable explanation of what has occurred, nor any consistent motive for felonious designs upon her," Nick added. "Unless she soon returns, nevertheless, there can be no doubt that she is a victim of knavery of some kind, that does not appear on the surface. Let me ask you a few questions. I then may hit upon some theory to fit the case."

"That's a ripping good idea, old top," Lord Waldmere nodded. "Come on with them."

"To begin with, then, has your wife many acquaintances here in town?"

"Hardly any, sir, 'pon my word. She is a Kentucky girl, and has spent but little time in this balmy city. We have met none during either of our visits. We live very privately."

"It is quite improbable, then, that the occupant of the taxicab was a friend, or even an acquaintance," Nick pointed out. "Deception having been employed, therefore, we must assume that she was forcibly carried away.

That also appears in the fact that you think the driver thrust her into the cab."

"I'm deuced well sure of that, Mr. Carter," Waldmere again declared. "The bally bounder placed his hand squarely on her shoulder, sir, and gave her a push. I can almost swear to that. If she——"

"Let me do most of the talking, Waldmere," Nick interrupted. "I wish to get at the salient points as quickly as possible. Answer me with merely an affirmative, or negative, when you can."

"Very well, sir."

"Has your father, or any of your family, ever threatened the girl because of your marriage?" Nick then inquired. "In other words, Waldmere, do you believe any of them capable of a conspiracy against her?"

"No, sir," protested the Englishman quickly. "They are above anything of that kind. Besides, Mr. Carter, they have jolly well cast us both out. No one knows where to find us."

"You think, then, that they may be safely eliminated from any connection with this affair?"

"Yes, absolutely."

"We must seek nearer home, then, for a motive," said Nick. "Had Miss Royal any former admirer who might——"

"No, no; nothing of the kind." Lord Waldmere quickly shook his head. "Her sweet heart has been an open book for me to read at will. There is nothing in that, sir."

"And you recall no incentive, or circumstance, that might have a bearing upon this matter?"

"No, none, Mr. Carter."

"Let's consider, then, the one nearest to it—your visit to the Imperial Loan Company," said Nick. "I think you said that Lady Waldmere did most of the business."

"She did the whole blooming business," Lord Waldmere quickly assured him. "She's jolly well fitted for it, is Mollie, while I'm a doughhead and——"

"I understand," Nick cut in. "You went with her to redeem the jewels, which had been pledged for ten thousand dollars. Did she have the money on her person? That may have been the incentive for the crime, if such it turns out to be."

"But that can't be, don't you know?" Waldmere at once protested. "Mollie had the bally ticket for the pledge, but she had no money. I had a certified bank check for the amount. Here it is, sir. See for yourself."

Nick merely glanced at the check, which Lord Waldmere hastily drew from his pocketbook. It bore the current date and corroborated the Englishman's statements.

"It seems to knock that theory on the head," Nick said thoughtfully, after a moment. "Nevertheless, by Jove, it may be that the jewels——"

Nick broke off abruptly, not stating what he had in mind. Instead, drawing forward in his chair, he said, more earnestly:

"By the way, Lord Waldmere, did your wife transact this business under her own name, or a fictitious one?"

"An assumed name, of course."

"The one by which you are known here?"

"No. She used another."

"What was it?"

Lord Waldmere scratched his head, staring desperately at the carpet for several moments.

"Dash it, sir! I've jolly well forgotten," he cried dubiously. "'Pon my honor, Mr. Carter, I can't remember."

"Rack your brains for a moment," Nick suggested, though he had no great hope of any desirable result.

"Hang it, sir! I'm giving them a ripping racking. But Mollie always kept the bally ticket, you see, and I had no hand in the blooming business. She has a head for it, don't you know, and I always let her run things for me. Blast it, sir, I can't remember!"

"Well, well, never mind," Nick said, a bit bluntly. "Whom did you see in the loan office?"

"The jolly manager, I think."

"Do you remember his name?"

"'Pon my word, sir, I don't," said Waldmere, with a groan over his inability to be of any material aid. "I don't know that I heard his bally name, sir, as far as that goes. Molly did all of the talking."

"What was said, or done?"

"Very little, sir, 'pon my word. Mollie turned in the ticket to a dinky clerk in a window. He took it to a back room, as I remember, and in about five minutes the bally manager came out."

"What did he say?" Nick inquired.

"He said as how the jewels were in the vault, which had been closed about five o'clock for the day, and that it couldn't be opened until to-morrow morning."

"He stated that it had a time lock, didn't he?"

"Exactly. That's just what he said."

"And that your wife could redeem the jewels if she were to call to-morrow morning?"

"Precisely," Lord Waldmere nodded. "That's all there was to the blooming business."

Nick did not feel so sure of it. He saw plainly, however, that there was nothing more to be learned from the titled Englishman, who obviously knew as little of business as a lad in knickerbockers.

More than an hour had passed since the episode on the avenue. There was no indication of Lady Waldmere's return, nor did Nick really expect it. He glanced at his watch and found that it was nearly seven o'clock.

"Dash it! I'm deucedly upset," Waldmere remarked, and he really looked so. "What the dickens am I to do? What——"

Nick interrupted him kindly, but impressively.

"There is only one wise thing for you to do, Lord Waldmere," said he. "You must leave this matter to me and do precisely what I direct. If your wife has been abducted, or is a victim of other knavery, I will leave no stone unturned to find her and punish the crooks. I can accomplish both, perhaps, while you would surely fail."

"You're jolly well right, Mr. Carter, as far as that goes," Waldmere frankly admitted.

"You must see, then, that my advice is sound," said Nick. "I will take the case, if you wish, but you must promise to follow my instructions."

"That's deucedly kind, sir, and I'll do so. I will, sir, 'pon my honor."

"Very good," said Nick. "Give the matter no publicity, then, at present. Remain here quietly until to-morrow morning, stating to others in the house merely

that your wife is away for a short time. I don't want the matter to reach the newspapers."

"Dear me, no!"

"Be silent, then, and discreet. Here is a card with my address and telephone number. Is there a telephone in this house?"

"There is, sir," Waldmere nodded.

"If your wife returns before morning, then, call up my office and inform whomever answers you," Nick directed. "That would probably end the matter. If she does not return, however, which now seems more probable, you may expect me here at half past eight to-morrow morning. I then will begin a thorough investigation. In other words, Lord Waldmere, I'm going at this like a bull at a gate."

The last was added chiefly to encourage the downhearted Englishman, who, strange to say, appeared to detect it. For he pulled himself together with a manly effort, then adjusted his monocle to gaze more intently at the detective, whose hand he warmly grasped with both of his.

"'Pon my honor, old top, I can't find words to thank you," he said gratefully. "I really can't, don't you know."

"Don't try, Lord Waldmere," Nick replied, pressing his hand. "Merely do only what I have directed. Keep a stiff upper lip and leave this matter to me. I'll call the turn, all right, as sure as you're a foot high."

CHAPTER III.

HOW NICK SIZED IT UP.

Nick Carter came out from dinner in his Madison Avenue residence after eight o'clock, two hours later than usual. Instead of going to his business office, he entered his private library, saying to Joseph, his butler, as he passed him in the deep, attractively furnished hall:

"Send Chick and Patsy to me. They're in the office."

Nick had waited only a few moments, when he was joined by his chief assistant, Chick Carter, who was presently followed by Patsy Garvan. Both knew that something of importance was in the wind, and Nick at once proceeded to tell them of what it consisted, covering all of the essential points of the case.

"Gee, that's some puzzle, chief, for fair!" commented Patsy, after listening attentively. "What's the game? His royal nob from England must be a decent sort of a chap, after all, don't you know. He sure has been dead square with the chorus girl."

"So he is, Patsy, and less shallow than he appears," Nick replied. "But he don't know enough about business to last him overnight. Evidently, however, his wife is a keen and clever girl, as well as handsome."

"Why not? She's an American girl," said Patsy.

"That's one reason why I took on the case," smiled Nick.

"The Imperial Loan Company," put in Chick. "Why, I know that concern. It's nothing else but a high-grade pawnshop. It was established by Isaac Meyer several years ago. I knew him when he had a shop in the Bowery. But he's nearly down and out, now with creeping paralysis. He never leaves home."

"Where is that?" Nick inquired.

"Over in Columbus Avenue."

"Who runs his business?"

"His manager," said Chick. "A man named Morris Garland. He has been with Meyer since he opened the Fifth Avenue place. It's only a few blocks from where you met the Englishman."

"I know the place very well, Chick, but none of the inmates," said Nick. "What do you know about Garland?"

"He's all aboveboard, Nick, as far as I know," Chick replied. "There is only one out about him, if that really cuts any ice."

"What is that?"

"I have seen him quite frequently with Stuart Floyd. They appear to be very friendly. You know Floyd, of course. He's about as keen and slick a fellow as can be found in this old town."

"Do you think so?"

"Don't you?"

"I don't know much about him, Chick, save that he is a well-known man about town. The police have nothing on him, have they?"

"No, nothing that I know of," Chick admitted. "Floyd has no record, to be sure, barring a record that makes him a mystery to me, at least."

"Why a mystery?"

"Because he has no visible means of support, yet he always has plenty of money, or appears to have," said Chick. "He inherited nothing, nevertheless, for I knew his people, as I have known him for years."

"I see."

"He has lived by his wits since he was fifteen. I never knew him to do a stroke of work. At thirty, nevertheless," Chick pointed out, "he frequents the best hotels and restaurants, lives like a lord, dresses like a millionaire, and spends money more lavishly than most of them. He apparently is a thoroughbred sport and man about town. But where does the coin come from? How does he get by? If that don't constitute a mystery, Nick, what the dickens does? I'm from Missouri. You'll have to show me."

Nick laughed.

"We are drifting from the more important matter," said he. "You know of nothing wrong in his relations with Morris Garland, do you?"

"No, nothing," Chick allowed. "I've told you all I know about him."

"He is not alone in those respects," Nick replied. "There are hundreds like him. I have heard, of course, that Stuart Floyd is a slick fellow. He really looks it, as far as that goes, for he is as clean-cut, attractive a man as one often meets. That's neither here nor there, however, at this stage of the game. We'll get back to Hecuba."

"Do you suspect the Imperial Loan Company, chief, in connection with Lady Waldmere's disappearance?" asked Patsy.

"I do."

"Why?"

"For two reasons," said Nick. "First, because there seems to be no one else to suspect. Second, because the episode occurred so soon after her visit to the loan company. That suggests a possible connection between them."

"I see the point."

"Furthermore, there are ten thousand dollars involved,

or jewels valued at close upon thirty," Nick added. "Those may be the incentive to knavery of some kind. There seems to be no other motive for a crime, in fact, assuming that a crime really has been committed."

"That's right, too, chief," nodded Patsy. "There seems to be nothing else to be gained, if Lord Waldmere had told a straight story."

"I have no doubt of that."

"But what could the loan company gain by abducting the woman?" Chick questioned, perplexed. "The jewels must be in their possession."

"Very true," Nick admitted. "They knew that Lady Waldmere had called to redeem them, and that she must have brought the funds with which to do so. They may not have known, however, that she intended redeeming the pledge with a certified check. They may have thought that she had the ten thousand dollars in cash on her person."

"Gee! that listens good to me, chief!" cried Patsy, quick to see the point. "That seems to be the only way to size it up."

"That is one way, at least," Nick replied, smiling a bit oddly.

"But it must have been a mighty slick job, Nick, in that case," Chick objected, with manifest doubt of the theory advanced by the other.

"It was a slick job."

"But how could they have framed it up so quickly?"

"What are you driving at?" Patsy demanded, turning upon Chick. "Why quickly?"

"That ought to be plain enough even to you," Chick retorted. "Lord Waldmere stated that he and his wife were in the office of the loan company only about five minutes."

"Well, I admit that."

"It is obvious, too, that their visit could not have been anticipated," Chick proceeded to argue. "Neither Morris Garland, nor the assistant manager, Moses Hart, could have known that Lady Waldmere had any intention of redeeming the jewelry at just that time."

"True again, old man," nodded Patsy, with an expression of perplexity returning to his face.

"That's what I mean, then, by their having framed up the job so quickly," Chick forcibly added.

"I get you."

"They would have had only five minutes in which to have laid their plans and made all the arrangements for executing them. That's a mighty short time in which to shape up such a job, to say nothing of getting ready to carry it out. It's not a simple stunt to pick up a woman on Fifth Avenue and get away with her from under her husband's eyes."

"Say, you're getting wiser every minute, Chick," cried Patsy, laughing. "I begin to think there really is something in what you say."

"You ought to have seen it before."

"What do you say, chief?"

Nick laughed and knocked the ashes from the cigar he was smoking.

"Chick's argument is all right, Patsy, as far as it goes," he replied. "We know that the couple were only a short time in the office of the loan company, and that their visit could not have been anticipated. We are not pinned down to five minutes, however."

"What do you mean?" questioned Chick.

"What Lord Waldmere really said was this—that, after talking with one of the clerks, who very likely was the assistant manager, the latter went into Garland's private office, where he remained about five minutes before either of them came out to resume the discussion."

"Gee! that's right, too," nodded Patsy.

"And it is quite significant," Nick added. "It certainly would not have taken Hart five minutes to state merely what the couple wanted."

"Surely not."

"Garland could have come out and joined them in half a minute, as far as that goes. Why, then, did he not do so? What were the two men doing that occupied five full minutes? It looks very much to me as if they were framing a job."

"But——"

"One moment, Chick," Nick interposed. "I know you're going to object again to my theory. I advanced that, however, as a matter of fact, only to point out that there could have been a reasonable motive for knavery."

"Ah, that's different," said Chick, smiling.

"I have no idea, nevertheless, assuming that Garland and Hart are back of this business, that they aimed to rob Lady Waldmere of money supposed to be on her person," Nick continued. "They would not have acted upon a mere supposition. They first would have made absolutely sure that she had the money."

"Certainly," Chick nodded. "That goes without saying."

"All the same, chief, there was a job framed up for some reason during those five minutes," Patsy said roundly. "I'd wager my bankroll on that."

"I think so, too," Nick agreed.

"But what's the game?" Chick questioned, still doubtful.

"Can't you think of one that may have been necessary?"

"Not on the spur of the moment."

"I can," said Nick, smiling.

"Well, well, out with it," laughed Chick, coloring slightly. "What do you suspect?"

Nick laid aside his cigar.

"Pull up a little nearer," said he. "I can tell you with very few words what I suspect—and how we may contrive to clinch my suspicions."

CHAPTER IV.

NICK DECLARES HIMSELF.

Nick Carter's anticipation proved to be correct. He received no telephone communication from Lord Waldmere, informing him that his pretty American wife had returned. In accord with his promise to the Englishman, therefore, while Chick and Patsy prepared to carry out the instructions given them, Nick appeared at the boarding house in Fifty-third Street at precisely half past eight that morning and rang the bell.

As the saying goes, however, Nick's own mother would not have recognized him. He was clad in a rather obtrusive plaid suit of pronounced English cut. He looked portly and imposing. He carried a heavy ebony cane. His strong, clean-cut face was artfully disguised. He could have walked through the Strand or Piccadilly, and readily have been taken for a Bond Street banker on his way to business.

Nick directed the servant to inform Mr. Waldron that

the friend he was expecting had arrived, and the detective was presently conducted to the first-floor front, which he entered and closed the door.

Lord Waldmere, looking white and haggard after a sleepless night, stared at him in blank amazement.

"Oh, I say!" he exclaimed. "There is some beastly mistake. I'm not expecting——"

"Yes, you are, Waldmere," Nick interrupted, smiling and speaking in his customary tones. "There is no mistake. I told you, you know, that I was going at this case like a bull at a gate."

Waldmere's face lighted wondrously.

"Oh, by Jove!" he cried, hand extended. "You are ——"

"The man you expect," Nick interposed, more seriously. "Don't be surprised at seeing me thus disguised. My face is very well known to the denizens of the underworld, and I frequently must get in my work under cover."

"You are jolly well covered, sir, as to that," Waldmere replied, smiling significantly. "I'd never know you. I'd take you for some blooming banker, or——"

"That is precisely what I aimed at," Nick replied. "But we have no time to waste. You have heard nothing from your wife, of course?"

"Not a word, or——"

"Or you would have advised me, certainly," Nick cut in again. "We will get right at this matter, then. Sit down while I give you a few instructions."

Lord Waldmere complied, all attention.

Half an hour later, or about quarter past nine, a taxicab stopped in front of the quarters of the Imperial Loan Company, which Nick and his companion entered, or that part of the establishment open to its patrons.

There was an atmosphere of dignity and business solidarity in the place. A long counter with a high brass lattice divided the public room. Back of it were two clerks and the assistant manager, Moses Hart, the former talking in whispers to customers through narrow windows. Three large steel safes and a vault in one of the walls had an imposing appearance. Off to the right were two private rooms, accessible only through the latticed inclosure. The doors of both were partly open.

There were half a dozen customers engaged at the windows, or waiting their turn, when Nick and Waldmere entered.

One among them was a seedily clad man with a sallow countenance and a scraggly brown beard, who appeared decidedly down in the world. A rusty derby hat was pulled nearly down to his ears. He was waiting to pawn a bit of jewelry, and a certain shifty light in his restless eyes denoted that he awaited the transaction with some misgivings, indicating that where he had obtained the bauble might consistently be questioned. He glanced suspiciously at Nick and the Englishman, then turned his head, as if to avoid observation.

Nick paid no attention to the fellow, however, but at once approached a window at one end of the long counter and nearer the private office, Lord Waldmere following at his elbow.

Moses Hart came to meet them at the window, a short dark man of forty, with gold-bowed spectacles astride his somewhat prominent nose.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said he, rubbing his hands and leaning over the counter. "What can I do for you this morning?"

Nick already had directed Waldmere to let him do all of the talking.

"Are you the manager here?" he inquired.

"The assistant manager," Hart corrected, smiling and bowing obsequiously. "What is your business?"

"We wish to redeem some valuable jewels which you are holding as collateral," said Nick. "You loaned my friend, here, ten thousand dollars on them, which he now is ready to pay, with the accrued interest. He called yesterday afternoon with his wife, who——"

"Dear me!" Hart quietly exclaimed, interrupting. "Yes, yes, I remember that one of the clerks mentioned it. Unfortunately, the vault containing the jewels had been closed for the day and could not be opened. Let me have our ticket, or voucher, given you for the pledge and I will get them."

Nick had had a constant eye on Hart's face. He saw that the man lost color, that an apprehensive expression in his squinted eyes evinced a perturbation that he could not entirely conceal. This convinced Nick that he was on the right track, though he realized that he still was laboring under some difficulties.

"Unfortunately, too, we are not in possession of the ticket for the loan," he replied. "It is in the keeping of his wife, who has gone away for a time with a friend."

"You must communicate with her, then, and have her send you the ticket," Hart rejoined.

"We cannot do that."

"Not do it?"

"No. We are not informed of her address."

"But you cannot expect us to redeem the pledge to any person except the holder of the ticket," Hart quickly protested. "That is the only safeguard for both parties. You must bring the ticket, of course, in order to obtain the jewels. Otherwise, we cannot possibly let you have them."

"But——"

"Oh, there is nothing to it," Hart insisted. "We do business in no other way."

"See here!" Nick exclaimed, and his voice took on a somewhat threatening ring. "Unless you——"

"One moment, sir," Hart again interrupted. "I will speak to our manager, Mr. Garland. He will talk with you. Wait just one moment."

Hart vanished from the window, and through the brass lattice Nick saw him hasten into one of the private offices.

Five minutes passed and he did not reappear.

"This looks deucedly like not getting them, by Jove," whispered Waldmere, gazing dubiously at the detective.

"I don't expect to get them," Nick muttered.

"No?"

"I came here only to size up these fellows and hear what they would say," Nick quietly added. "Say nothing while I am talking with the manager, if he ever decides to show up."

"You think——"

"There's nothing to it. The two men are discussing the situation. They don't like it for some reason. I must find later of what that reason consists. It may be the key to the whole business."

"I'm jolly well convinced that——"

"Quiet. Here comes the manager."

A tall, somewhat cadaverous man of forty was approaching from the private office. His bushy brows were knit, and he had an aggressive aspect that gave promise of nothing favorable. He came straight to the window at which Nick and Waldmere were standing.

"Are you the gentlemen who wish to redeem some jewels?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes," said Nick shortly.

"I am Mr. Garland, the manager. My assistant has told me what you have said. There really is nothing we can do for you. You will have to bring the ticket for the pledge in order to redeem it."

"But we cannot get the ticket until this gentleman's wife returns," Nick replied.

"Where has she gone?"

"We don't know. She is away with a friend."

"Is the ticket in her name?"

"Yes."

"What name?"

"We don't know that, either," said Nick. "She used a fictitious name when she negotiated the loan."

"Why did she do that?" Garland demanded. "There should have been no occasion for it. We do all of our business aboveboard and expect no less of our patrons. Really, gentlemen, this matter don't look quite right to me. You will have to wait until the woman returns, or sends you the ticket."

Nick Carter's disguised face took on a more threatening frown. He pressed nearer the window, replying, in peppery tones:

"This don't look right to you, eh? What is it, sir, that don't look right to you."

"We will not discuss that point," said Garland curtly. "I have told you the only way by which you can redeem the pledge and obtain the jewels."

"No, you haven't," snapped Nick hotly. "I can appeal to the authorities. I can call in the police. I'll do it, too, unless you come down from your high horse."

"Don't be foolish, my man," said Garland, frowning.

"I'm not at all sure that the jewels are here. I'll find out—I'll make it a point to find out."

"Nonsense! You talk like an ass," Garland protested.

"Produce them, then," frothed Nick. "Let's have a look at them, at least. If they——"

"They are in the time-lock vault, with a thousand other pledges," Garland hurriedly explained. "I cannot produce them without searching the entire vault. You cannot tell me the name under which they are pledged. I have no other means of finding them immediately. It would take me half a day to go through the vault and identify them. You talk like a fool, sir. Bring the ticket and the amount of the loan, and you shall have the jewels within half a minute."

Nick continued to storm and argue.

While this was in progress, attracting the attention of all in the place, Moses Hart came from the private office. He did not pause to join in the dissension, however, but at once went on to a narrow window at the lower end of the long counter—that at which the seedy, sinister-looking man then was waiting.

Bending close to the window, Hart winked significantly and said, with his voice lowered:

"Do you want to make a bit of money?"

The fellow's shifty eyes lighted eagerly.

"Does a hungry cat want meat?" he returned, in an expressive whisper.

"What's your name?" Hart asked.

"Jerry Nolan."

"I want to find out who that man is who——"

"The gink doing the talking?"

"Yes."

"I get you, boss."

"I want you to follow him when he leaves here, and find out," Hart went on. "Pick both of them up when they leave."

"I'll do it, boss! I'll find out for you, or break a leg," Nolan earnestly assured him.

"Don't return here to tell me, however," Hart added. "I want you to inform my partner."

"The geeser having the spiel with the hothead?"

"Yes. I will tell you where you must meet him."

"Come over with it," nodded Nolan.

Hart hastily informed him.

"I get you, boss," Nolan repeated. "I'm on to the job, and will be there, all right."

"Make sure you're not detected," Hart cautioned.

"Leave me alone for that."

"And say nothing about this."

"And for that, too," whispered Nolan, with an expressive leer.

"That's all, then. Go ahead."

Nolan turned away from the window. He bestowed another swift, furtive glance upon the detective, then hitched up his baggy trousers and sneaked out of the place.

Nick Carter, after an apparently vain mission, departed with Lord Waldmere five minutes later.

CHAPTER V.

NOLAN MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Jerry Nolan proved as good as his word, in so far as what he had been directed to accomplish was concerned.

He followed Nick Carter and Lord Waldmere from the quarters of the loan company, and something like an hour following their departure after their apparently vain mission, Nolan put in an appearance in the upper section of Amsterdam Avenue, where he had been directed to await the coming of Mr. Morris Garland.

If one were to have judged from the expression on Nolan's sinister face, however, one would have felt reasonably sure that he could not be wisely trusted, that he had sized up the circumstances from his own evil standpoint, and was bent upon taking further advantage of them than he seemed likely to derive. In other words, Nolan appeared to suspect that there was something crooked in the wind, and was resolved to make the most of it.

All this would have been even more obvious to an observer of Nolan's actions upon approaching the appointed rendezvous.

He did not wait on the corner, as he had been directed. Instead, he slunk around it, apparently watching the pedestrians within his range of vision in the avenue, and presently he stole over to an opposite doorway, which seemed to afford a more desirable vantage point, and from which he continued his sinister vigil.

Presently he sighted among the comparatively few peo-

plé then in that part of the avenue the man he was expecting. He recognized him at once, though he then was nearly a block away and on the opposite side of the thoroughfare.

There could be no mistaking the tall figure and dark, cadaverous face of the head manager of the Imperial Loan Company.

Nolan's eyes lighted when Garland appeared in the near distance. One would have said that he was thinking of the reward for the scurrilous work he had agreed to do.

"Here's where I'll get mine, all right," he said to himself. "I'll make him settle sooner or later. I reckon I'd better hike over to the corner where I'm to meet him, or he might suspect that I——"

Nolan's train of thought was brought to an abrupt end by a sudden, unexpected move of the other.

Morris Garland turned from the sidewalk and quickly crossed the avenue. He then walked quite slowly, with his gaze directed to the side from which he had come, and once he paused for a moment to gaze at the door and windows of an opposite house, one of a long brick block.

Nolan took a look at it, also, but he could discover nothing warranting Garland's manifest interest in the house.

The door was closed. The curtains at most of the windows were drawn down. Some of the windows were dusty, and the front steps had not recently been swept. The house looked, in fact, aside from its furnishings, as if it was unoccupied.

"What's hit him, now?" Nolan asked himself. "Why is he sizing up that crib? Nobody home but the gas, and that's leaking out. I wonder——"

Another move by Garland broke Nolan's train of thought.

Garland quickly recrossed the avenue, then hastened up to the appointed corner, glancing sharply in all directions.

"Looking for me," Nolan tersely thought, slinking back in the doorway. "I'll let him look for half a minute and see what he'll do next."

Garland did not look as long as half a minute. He evidently assumed that Nolan had not yet completed his work and arrived there. He turned abruptly and hastened to a house on the opposite corner of the cross-street, entering with a key.

"That must be where the bloke lives," Nolan reasoned. "That's why I was told to come up here to report. I'll see—huh! there he is again."

Nolan caught sight of him at one of the front windows. He could see his dark face between the lace draperies. He watched it intently, with even a more sinister look in his own keen eyes.

Garland evidently was watching for the expected man.

"I'll sneak out when he isn't watching, and then show up on the corner," Nolan said to himself. "He won't be wise, then, to the fact that I got here first. I'll put something over on him, all right, or I've doped out this business all wrong."

Something like five minutes later, after waiting for a favorable opportunity, Nolan appeared on the street corner opposite Garland's residence. He had been waiting only a moment when the latter emerged from the house and hastened over to join him.

"Well, you're here, Nolan, at last," he said, a bit curtly.

"Sure I'm here, boss," Nolan nodded. "You can always bank on my making good."

"Have you done what Hart directed?"

"The geezer who hired me? Yes, of course. I sure have done it. If I hadn't, I wouldn't be here," said Nolan, with an expressive leer.

"Well, what did you learn?" Garland demanded, more sharply eying him.

"I followed the two blokes down Fifth Avenue about three blocks, but I couldn't get next to anything they were saying," Nolan proceeded to report. "They parted on a corner, and then I followed the big guy, him as put the peppery spiel in the pawnshop."

"Where did he go?"

"Over to a house in Madison Avenue."

"Did you find out his name?"

"Sure I did," Nolan declared, much as if such a question was needless. "Trust me for that. I was wise to it, all right, when I piped him going in that crib."

"Who is he? What do you know about him?"

"He's a fly gun, boss; that's what he is. He's the biggest squeeze in the whole dick outfit. His name is Carter."

"Not Nick Carter?"

"That's what."

"Are you sure of it, absolutely sure of it?"

"As sure as if a house fell on me," Nolan forcibly asserted. "Why wouldn't I be? I've had him after me more'n once. He was made up with grease paint and spinach, all right, but I was wise to his true mug when he went up the steps and into the house. I knew before where the dick lived. What's the game, boss? I could help you further, if you fancied putting me wise."

Garland's dark face had, upon learning the name of Waldmere's companion that morning, taken on a look of more serious concern. It vanished almost instantly, however, and his teeth met with a vicious snap, smacking defiance, which evidently impelled Nolan to venture offering his further assistance.

Garland received the suggestion with a darker frown, however, and quickly shook his head.

"There isn't any game, my man," he said, quite sternly. "You put that idea out of your head, and keep it out. You were not employed for this work because of any game, but because we had no one else whom we could send conveniently at that time."

"Beg pardon, boss," Nolan quickly responded. "I'm wise, all right, now that you've put me next. It was the two coveys, Carter and the other gink, whom you think were playing some kind of a game."

"That's just the size of it," Garland hastened to assure him.

"I'm wise, all right, boss, now that you've told me."

"Both men were strangers to me," Garland added, in an explanatory way. "We suspected them of trickery and wanted to learn who they were, or more particularly the one you say is Nick Carter."

"You can bank on that, boss."

"It's all right, then, no doubt, for Nick Carter would not have engaged in any crooked work," Garland proceeded. "He must have had some other object in view. I shall probably be informed sooner or later. What do I owe you for your services?"

"That's up to you, boss," said Nolan, apparently content to drop the matter and accept what was offered, as well as the explanation just made.

"Will a ten-dollar note pay you?" questioned Garland, taking out a roll of money.

"Sure thing, boss, and then some."

"Let it keep your mouth closed, also," Garland added, stripping off a bank note from the roll. "I wouldn't want Carter to think I have any reason to have suspected him."

"I'm dumb," Nolan assured him, eagerly accepting the money.

"You will say nothing about it, eh?"

"On my word."

"Not even if——"

"Forget it!" Nolan cut in pointedly. "Forget it, boss; I have."

"Very good," Garland said approvingly. "See that you don't recall it."

He turned away with the last, quickly crossing the street and entering his residence. From one of the windows, however, he proceeded to watch Nolan down the avenue, until the seedy, sinister fellow vanished around a distant corner.

But Mr. Jerry Nolan was nothing if not crafty. He did not so much as glance back before turning the corner. Nor did he then pay further attention to Garland to see whether he left his house.

As he was passing that at which the pawnbroker had paused to gaze, however, Nolan glanced furtively at the door. He saw there was no name plate on it. He saw the dust on the steps and the soiled windows on the second floor, and he came to a perfectly natural conclusion.

"There's been something doing in this crib, or that Pawnee Indian would not have had so much interest in it," he said to himself. "It appears to be unoccupied. I'll nose around a bit and make sure of it. Then I'll find out whether there's only ten bucks for me in this job."

Nolan fixed in his mind the precise location of the house by counting from the end of the block. He then walked around to the next street, from which he stealthily picked his way through an alley until he could see the back of the suspected dwelling.

It would have confirmed the suspicions of any discerning man. The drawn curtains, the soiled windows, the closed shutters of those in the rear yard—all denoted that the house, though furnished, had not been recently occupied, unless for some covert purpose.

Nolan promptly came to another conclusion—that he would sneak into the house and see what more he could learn.

He went about it with the skill and caution of a professional sneak thief, which he looked more like than anything else. He crept through the alley and into the yard back of the house, where he crouched briefly under the high board fence to study the back windows of all the near dwellings.

Feeling sure that he had not been seen, he then took several skeleton keys from his pocket, quickly selecting one which he thought would serve his purpose.

It did.

Within half a minute Nolan had quietly unlocked the rear door and stepped noiselessly into a back basement hall, closing the door after him.

There he waited and listened, scarce breathing, until five full minutes had passed.

Not a sound came from any part of the house.

Not a sign of life could be seen in the dusty, dimly lighted hall.

Nolan then crept up the narrow stairway, still listening and alert.

There seemed to be, however, no occasion for such exquisite caution. Nolan reached the next floor, that on the level with the front street. He peered into one room after another, but discovered nothing wrong.

The kitchen looked cold and out of commission. The shutters were closed. The range and iron sink were smeared with vaseline to prevent rusting. Dust had collected on them, and they looked gray and dirty.

The dining room was uninviting. The sideboard was destitute, the polished table bare. The library, sitting room, and parlor, all were in order, but dim, cheerless, and deserted.

Nolan crept up to the next floor.

He peered into two front chambers, both neatly furnished, but he saw nothing of special interest.

He then stole toward the rear of the house.

He came to the open door of an interior room, one having no window. It was lighted only from the hall, save the artificial light, then switched off.

Nolan stopped and peered into this dim bedroom. Something on the unopened bed caught his eye—and Nolan involuntarily caught his breath.

He beheld a motionless figure, clad in a dark-blue suit, with shapely white hands crossed on its breast, with upturned, lueless face, as colorless as if death had lately claimed her—the face and figure of a surpassingly beautiful woman.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW IT WAS DONE.

Jerry Nolan was not rattled by the discovery he had made. It was not in his nature to be upset by anything short of a cyclone or an earthquake.

He gazed in for several moments at the motionless form on the bed, then tiptoed into the room to make a closer inspection.

"Is she dead?" he asked himself. "Has she been croaked by crooks?"

Nolan paused beside the bed, bending above her.

It seemed to him that he had never beheld a more beautiful face.

He touched her hand and found it cold, then listened and looked in vain for any sign that she was breathing.

There was an ugly gleam in Nolan's eyes when he straightened up and turned toward the door. He caught sight of a switch key on the wall, and realized that with more light he could better determine the woman's condition. He turned the key and a flood of electric light filled the room.

When he swung round again other objects met Nolan's gaze. The woman's hat and jacket were lying on a chair. Beside them lay an open hand bag. It contained only a dainty lace handkerchief. Her purse and other valuables evidently had been stolen.

Her kid gloves had been tossed upon a bureau. Near

them on the bureau, placed in a small china tray, was a slender object, that glistened brightly in the electric light.

Nolan approached and gazed at it.

It was a small glass hypodermic syringe, nearly filled with a colorless fluid.

A scrap of paper, on which a few words were typewritten, had been placed under the tray.

Nolan drew it out and read:

"This woman is only drugged. Inject the contents of the syringe into her arm to revive her."

Nolan did not hesitate.

He took up the syringe with the familiarity of a physician, or of a dope fiend accustomed to using one, and again approached the bed.

Drawing up the sleeve from the woman's shapely arm, he plunged the needle through the fair skin and injected the contents of the syringe, which he then replaced on the bureau.

Nolan then put a chair near the side of the bed and sat down to await the result of this treatment.

He had not long to wait.

Scarce five minutes had passed when a tinge of color appeared in the woman's pale cheeks.

Her lips parted slightly and Nolan then could detect that she was breathing. Another minute brought a deep-drawn sigh and a low moan, soon followed by a fluttering of her eyelids.

"She's still in the ring, all right," Nolan congratulated himself. "They were a clever bunch, for fair, that did this job. Ten bucks, eh? I'll soon see about that ten bucks' gag. They'll come down handsomely for this, those two rats. Ah, now her lamps are lighted!"

The woman had opened her eyes.

She stared up at Nolan vacantly for several moments, too dazed and prostrated for returning consciousness to bring any immediate appreciation of her surroundings and what had befallen her.

Nolan did not speak, but waited patiently, knowing it then would be vain to question her.

The woman broke the silence. She seemed to be slowly grasping the situation, for she suddenly faltered vacantly, scarce above a whisper:

"Where am I?"

Nolan saw that she could not be moved immediately. He asked, a bit indifferently:

"Don't you know where you are?"

"No."

"Or how you came here?"

"No. I——"

"Wait a bit," Nolan interrupted. "Your head will clear in a few more minutes. Then you'll be able to tell me. What is your name? Can't you remember that?"

"Yes, of course," she replied, with more strength. "My name is Mary Waldmere."

"Ah!"

"I am Lady Waldmere, of——"

She broke off abruptly, starting up from the pillow, only to sink back again, too weak to rise. A frightened look in her eyes, however, told that she was beginning to remember.

"Where am I? Where is his lordship?" she cried, with lips quivering. "Why am I here? Who are you?"

"Hush!" Nolan cautioned. "Don't get excited, madam. It might not be good for you. Wait until you can recall all that happened to you. Then I'll see what can be done for——"

"Oh, oh, I remember—I remember it now!" cried Lady Waldmere, rising to her elbow. "I was seized and carried away by wicked men—and a woman! Tell me where I am. Tell me why I was brought here, and——"

"You calm yourself," Nolan interrupted, with some authority. "Keep cool and tell me the whole business. Do you know the men who brought you here?"

"No, no; I do not," moaned the woman.

"Or the woman who was with them?"

"No, nor the woman. She was veiled."

"How did they get away with you?"

"With the help of their chauffeur," Lady Waldmere brokenly explained. "He enticed me to the taxicab he was driving. I was told that a friend wished to see me. I did not know—did not suspect. I went with him to the taxicab door, leaving my husband waiting on the avenue."

"And then?" Nolan tersely questioned.

"There were two men and a woman in the taxicab," Lady Waldmere went on, quite hysterically. "The woman was veiled, as I told you. She held out her hand to me and I supposed that she knew me. I did not dream of anything wrong."

"Sure not," Nolan nodded.

"But when she grasped my hand, she seized it firmly and drew me into the taxicab. At the same time I felt the chauffeur push me from behind. I fell on the floor of the cab. One of the men seized me and held me, while the other covered my mouth with his hand."

"Brutes!"

"I nearly fainted," Lady Waldmere went on, moaning. "I knew, then, that I was being abducted. I tried to struggle and scream, when the taxicab sped away, but my efforts were futile. Then I felt a sharp pricking sensation in my shoulder——"

"The needle of a syringe," put in Nolan.

"I don't know—I don't know!" moaned the woman. "I know only that I fainted or lost consciousness. That is all I remember till now. I cannot tell who or why I——"

"One moment," said Nolan. "Were the men smooth shaved, or——"

"No, no! Both wore beards."

"They were in disguise."

"I cannot tell. I know only that I am in despair. I know——"

"Try to be calm," Nolan again interrupted. "Wait till you regain your strength. You then will be able to leave here, and——"

"Leave here?"

Lady Waldmere looked at him with a sudden wild hope leaping up in her tear-filled eyes.

"That's what I said," Nolan nodded.

"Do you mean—do you mean that you are not in the employ of my abductors?" Lady Waldmere asked, in faltering, frantic whispers. "Do you mean——"

"Oh, I'm in their employ, all right," Nolan dryly put in. "Alas, then——"

"But not as you infer," Nolan added.

"Tell me what you do mean, then," entreated the woman white and trembling. "Don't keep me in suspense. Am I to remain here and——"

"Not by a long chalk!"

"You will take me away? You will restore me to my husband?" Lady Waldmere's voice took on a hopeful ring. "Oh, I will pay you any sum if you will do so. Tell me——"

"Do you feel able to leave here?"

"Able—yes!"

"At once?"

"Heavens, man, yes!" Lady Waldmere started up from the bed. "But don't deceive me! I beg that you'll not deceive me. Will you take me away from here? Will you restore me to my husband? Will you——"

"You bet I will, madam!" cried Nolan. "That's what I'm here for."

"But if in the employ of those men——"

"Oh, that's another story," Nolan again interrupted, assisting the woman to rise. "I am also in the employ of your husband."

"My husband!"

"I am a detective. My name is Chick Carter."

The last was instantly taken up by a fierce, threatening voice in the adjoining hall.

"Throw up your hands, then, and keep them up! Let the woman alone—or you'll be a dead one!"

Chick swung round like a flash.

In the open doorway stood Morris Garland, with face as black as midnight and as threatening as his leveled weapon.

Behind him loomed the burly figure of a red-featured cabman, with blood in his eye and a blackjack in his hand.

Two other figures, those of women, were crouching against the wall farther down the hall—out of view of the startled detective.

CHAPTER VII.

NICK CARTER'S DOINGS.

It now is obvious, of course, that Chick Carter lied to Mr. Morris Garland—which was entirely warranted by the circumstances, since knavery can be successfully met only with its own weapons.

Nick Carter had turned only the nearest corner after leaving the quarters of the loan company, when he was overtaken by Chick, who, in reality, had been there only to note what followed Nick's visit with Waldmere, and to watch any move that either Garland or Hart might afterward make.

It so happened, however, owing to an unexpected opportunity afforded Chick, that their own respective designs were reversed.

"Well, what was doing?" Nick immediately questioned, when Chick hastened across the street and joined him. "I saw Hart talking to you through the window.

Chick hastily informed him, and Nick's face underwent a decided change.

"That does settle it," said he. "We have given them a fright, and now have them on the run. It's dollars to fried rings, now, that my suspicions are correct. It is necessary only to clinch them and nail all of the culprits involved in the game."

"What game?" asked Lord Waldmere curiously. "I'm jolly well mystified by this. Why— "

"Don't question," Nick interrupted. "Be patient, Waldmere, until I have got in my work. I then will answer all the questions you care to ask."

"But, hang it, old top, I——"

"You must do what I say," Nick cut in. "Time never was more valuable. One minute's delay may queer all of my work."

"What next?" Chick tersely asked, when Waldmere subsided.

"We'll change mounts," Nick replied pointedly. "Go ahead and keep the appointment with Garland. Meet him, as directed, though he'll not be likely to show up there for some little time, providing I rightly anticipate what's coming."

"What shall I tell him?"

"Tell him who I am," Nick directed. "Give it to him straight, in your own way, but only what will be consistent with your assumed character. Got me?"

"Dead to rights," Chick nodded.

"Be off, then, and I'll do the rest," said Nick. "I have left Patsy in the office, in case of sudden need. Call him up yourself, if occasion requires it."

Chick responded with another nod and hurried away.

"Now, Waldmere, you return to your lodgings," said Nick. "You will only be in my way, if you remain. Wait right there until I come."

"But——"

"Don't stop to question, dear fellow," Nick interrupted. "Every minute is of value."

"By Jove, I'm all at sea, don't you know, but here goes!" exclaimed his lordship, seeming suddenly to realize that he was indeed in the way.

He smiled with the last, nevertheless, and hurried across the street, presently vanishing around the nearest corner.

Nick Carter stepped into the corridor of a near building. The janitor, with a broom and a pail of rubbish, the result of his morning's cleaning, was just approaching a small storeroom under the rise of stairs.

Nick overtook him at the open door.

"One moment, janitor," said he, stepping into the narrow room. "I am Nick Carter, the detective, and I'm on a rush case. Hang onto this cane and disguise until I call for them, will you? I then will make it worth your while."

"Sure, sor, I'm glad to do it," cried the janitor, eyes lighting. "Who don't know Nick Carter?"

"Good on your head," Nick nodded. "I want to reverse my trousers and coat, also, which will take but half a minute."

"Go ahead, sor. The room is yours for the asking."

Nick emerged from it in precisely thirty seconds, so changed in looks and attire, the latter expressly made to be quickly reversed, that he bore not even a remote resemblance to the man who had entered it. Then wearing no facial disguise, he again thanked the janitor and hurried away from the building, retracing his steps to Fifth Avenue.

Not more than five minutes had passed since he departed from the loan company office, when, from a doorway on the opposite side of the avenue, he was in a position to cautiously watch the place.

He had returned none too soon. He scarce had turned his gaze in that direction, when Garland came from the loan office in company with a handsome, flashily dressed woman of twenty-five, whom Nick had seen at a typewriter through the partly open door of Garland's private office.

"Garland's stenographer," he muttered. "I thought I recognized her, though she sat with her face averted. Vera Vantoon, eh? I have seen her with Stuart Floyd, of whom Chick was speaking last evening. She may be a connecting link in this chain. By Jove, they are off at a canter, for fair. On the run is right."

Garland and Vera Vantoon, a pronounced brunette with a striking face and figure, were hurrying up Fifth Avenue, evidently on as important a mission as the detective had been led to suspect.

Nick immediately followed them, though on the opposite side of the avenue.

They had covered less than two blocks, however, when an approaching taxicab swerved to the curbing and a man sprang out, who evidently had seen them from within the conveyance.

"By Jove, there's Stuart Floyd himself," thought Nick, stepping into a near doorway to watch them. "He was bound for Garland's office, as sure as I'm a foot high. I have forced the game, all right, plainly enough."

The last was occasioned by the earnest conference at once begun by the three, Garland doing most of the talking, and presently slipping a small cloth parcel into Floyd's coat pocket—a move undetected by Nick because of the intervening taxicab.

Floyd was an erect, splendidly built man with a smoothly shaved, clean-cut face, with regular features of an almost classic cast, an intellectual brow, and remarkably keen and expressive gray eyes. He was scrupulously well dressed and in strict accord with the dictates of fashion. He would readily have passed, as Chick had stated, for a millionaire or a prominent figure in the Gotham smart set. He was very well known, too, from Harlem to the Battery, though for more and varied reasons than any was yet led to suspect.

Nick saw plainly that he could not wisely undertake to overhear what the three were discussing so earnestly, nor did he attempt to do so. He knew very well, or thought he did, and was content to await what followed.

Nick had not long to wait. After an earnest conference lasting about five minutes, Garland and the woman entered the taxicab, which sped rapidly away, while Stuart Floyd walked briskly down the avenue.

"What's the meaning of that?" Nick asked himself. "They may have gone to make sure the abducted woman is still in safe keeping. Be that as it may, it's long odds that Floyd will rejoin them sooner or later. I have no course but to stick to him. I'll head him off, by Jove, and see what he will say for himself."

Nick did not immediately do so. He shadowed Floyd, instead, to one of the leading jewelry firms, who were large importers of diamonds and other gems, and through one of the broad plate windows he saw Floyd speak to the senior member of the firm and then retire with him to his private office.

Half an hour passed before Floyd emerged. He paused and shook hands with the merchant, bowing and smiling as if he had not a care on his mind, much less a burden, and he then left the store and walked briskly to a near hotel, entering the barroom and buying a drink.

Nick suspected what he was doing all the while, but he was not absolutely sure of it, and he continued the espionage. Passing through the hotel office to keep an eye on his quarry, he suddenly came face to face with Floyd in the adjoining corridor, the latter having just left the barroom.

It was an opportunity for which Nick had been waiting. He stepped directly in front of the man, saying familiarly:

"Hello! You're just the man I want to see, Mr. Floyd. Give me half a minute, will you?"

Floyd knew Nick Carter by sight. If he had seen a ghost, he would not have turned more pale for a moment. That he was a man of extraordinary nerve and self-possession, however, appeared in that, aside from his momentary paleness, not a feature of his clean-cut face evinced a sign of fear, or even secret perturbation.

"You are Mr. Carter, I believe," he replied, looking Nick straight in the eye.

"Yes."

"Why have you stopped me? What can I do for you?"

"Tell me what you know about the Imperial Loan Company," said Nick, straight from the shoulder.

Floyd heard him without a change of countenance.

"All that I know may be told with a single word—nothing," he replied.

"You know of the concern, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Are you acquainted with the managers?"

"Yes."

"Well acquainted?"

"So well acquainted, Mr. Carter, that I am not inclined to discuss them with any detective, not excluding yourself, before knowing the purpose of his inquiries," Floyd said coldly.

"If you know only good of them, Mr. Floyd, a detective is the very man with whom you should be most willing to discuss them," Nick retorted.

"I will not argue the point," Floyd said, flushing slightly.

"There is no occasion," said Nick. "Do you know anything about the inside workings of this loan company?"

"What do you mean, sir, by inside workings?"

"The methods they employ."

"I already have said, Carter, that I know nothing about them, aside from a personal acquaintance with the two managers," Floyd stiffly asserted. "Mr. Garland is a gentleman. Mr. Hart is another. That is all I can tell you."

"All that you will tell me, Mr. Floyd, is what you mean," Nick said pointedly. "You should have learned, nevertheless, that reticence is equivalent to——"

"Stop a moment," Floyd interrupted, with lips curling. "What's the big idea? What's it all about? Do you suspect the loan company of anything wrong?"

"Frankly, Mr. Floyd, I do," Nick nodded.

"Of what?"

"Of having abducted, or caused to be abducted, a woman known as Mrs. Archie Waldron. Did you ever hear of her?"

"Never! Permit me to add, Carter, that I never heard of anything more absurd."

"Than what?" questioned Nick, still sharply regarding him.

"Such a suspicion," snapped Floyd, his eyes dilating. "What earthly motive could they have for abducting a woman, or for any other breach of the law? Both are

married and have families. Both are men of eminent respectability, of stirling integrity, and they manage a very profitable business. What earthly incentive could they have for committing crime? That's absurd, utterly improbable. You detectives go over the traces much too often, Carter, in your still-hunts after victims. You are worse in a way than the crooks, for you smirch the reputation of honorable men, while crooks get only their purses. Good morning, sir. That is all I have to say."

Floyd apparently had worked himself up to a state of righteous indignation, and none could better feign any sentiment he chose. He drew himself up and turned to go, but Nick detained him with a gesture.

"One moment," he replied. "You have said considerable, Floyd, for one who knew nothing about the Imperial Loan Company. I should be blind, indeed, if I did not see that. You extol them in order to divert my suspicions. But the fact that you think it is necessary to do so proves quite conclusively, not only that you know much more than you have stated, but also that my suspicions are correct. I could logically go even a step further, Floyd, and suspect you of being in their game."

Floyd's thin red lips parted scornfully, revealing a double row of sharp white teeth. It gave him for a moment the vicious expression of a dog about to bite. Instead, he vented a cold and mirthless laugh, as cold and mirthless as the ring from rapiers crossed in mortal combat.

"You go to thunder, Carter," said he, sneering contemptuously. "I would not lower myself by even denying your slanderous insinuations. In their game, or in any game—bah! You disgust me! Go to thunder!"

And Mr. Stuart Floyd, with the air and aspect of one who felt that he had squelched the famous detective, turned on his heel and entered the hotel office.

Nick Carter smiled and passed into the barroom.

"That will keep you going, all right," he said to himself. "That's all I want of you. I'll get you hands down at the finish."

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW NICK MADE GOOD.

Nick Carter did not remain long in the barroom, only long enough to deftly put on a simple disguise, unobserved by any person in the room. He then passed out to the street and approached the hotel office—just as Stuart Floyd came out, departing quite hurriedly.

He walked by Nick, nearly touching him, but he did not recognize him. He glanced furtively into the barroom when passing it, nevertheless, which convinced Nick that he still was supposed to be there, and that his quarry was bent upon making a quick get-away.

Nick followed him cautiously, as before, noting that Floyd now appeared more hurried and apprehensive, but evidently not suspecting that he was being shadowed.

Floyd hastened over to Broadway, where he entered the quarters of the Crosstown Collateral Trust Company, one of the largest concerns of this kind in the country, if not in the world.

Nick watched him from outside.

Floyd appeared remarkably familiar with the place. He nodded to several of the clerks, waving his hand to the bookkeeper, and at the same time he proceeded directly to the private office of the president of the company, which he entered without the formality of knocking.

Nick Carter's eyes took on a gleam of increasing satisfaction. He continued to wait and watch.

Presently a clerk hurried into the private office, evidently having been summoned. He emerged in a few moments and vanished into the business inclosure, where the doors of several huge vaults in the rear wall gave the place the appearance of a safety deposit, or a wealthy banking institution.

Five minutes later the same clerk again visited the private office, remaining only a moment, and half a minute later Floyd came out and started for the street.

Nick stole into a near doorway.

Floyd emerged in a moment and walked rapidly to a drug store on an opposite corner, proceeding directly to a telephone booth in the rear of the store, quickly entering and tightly closing the door.

Nick already was at the open door of the store. He saw that the booth stood in an angle formed by two of the counters. He saw, too, that there then were no customers and only one clerk in the store, just then engaged in wiping one of the show cases.

Nick stepped in and instantly caught the clerk's eye, though one of his own was constantly fixed upon the back of Floyd's head, visible through the window in the door of the booth. Floyd then was hurriedly looking up a number in the telephone-exchange book.

Nick cautioned the clerk with a significant glance and by holding up his forefinger. He then turned the lapel of his vest and displayed his detective's badge.

The clerk appeared to grasp the situation. He nodded and continued his work.

Nick stepped back of the opposite counter, quickly crouching out of sight behind it. He then crept to the rear of the store and within half a minute he was directly opposite one side of the telephone booth.

On hands and knees under the counter, he placed one ear against the side of the booth—and he then could faintly hear the voice of the man within.

The following broken remarks reached his ears, broken by the occasional responses from the person with whom Floyd was talking, whom the detective of course could not hear:

"There is no question about it," Floyd was forcibly saying. "I know positively that he is on the case. . . . Yes, yes, of course! But we can prevent that and bluff him to a standstill. He cannot prove that you know anything about her. . . . That's true, but I've got the goods and will show up shortly. The best way, then, will be to phone directly to his office and state where she can be found. That probably would end the matter, and there will be no way of telling from whom the information came. He could only guess at that. . . . The sooner the better, of course. I have hastened to notify you only to put you on your guard in case he shows up there again before I arrive. Stave him off in some way until I come. It then will be soft walking. I'll come at once. So long!"

Nick heard the sharp click of the hook when the receiver was replaced.

Floyd came from the booth almost immediately and left the store without so much as a glance at the clerk.

Nick crept from under the counter and entered the booth. He paused briefly to size up what he had heard. He felt

sure Floyd had telephoned either to Hart, or Garland, at their place of business. He turned to the telephone and rang up his own business office.

"Line's busy!" called the exchange operator.

Nick waited.

"Who is on it?" he asked himself. "Patsy must be there. I directed him not to leave. Chick may have called him up, as I suggested, but for what reason? Hang this delay! It may prove expensive."

Nick tried again and succeeded. He heard the familiar voice of Patsy Garvan over the wire.

"This is the chief talking," said Nick.

"Oh, gee!" Patsy exclaimed. "I was just wondering how I could get next to you."

"What's up?" Nick questioned, deferring his own communication.

"Some one just phoned here that the woman we're seeking can be found at No. 1680B Amsterdam Avenue. The speaker evidently was a man, but I did not know his voice, nor could I get anything more from him."

"I can guess who," said Nick. "I was about to tell you that you would soon receive that information."

"What shall I do?"

"Take Danny and a couple of plain-clothes men to aid you," Nick quickly directed. "Raid the house quietly. I hardly think you will find any one else there. If you do, however, make sure that none escapes."

"Trust me for that."

"I'll nail the culprits elsewhere."

"Good enough! I've got you."

"That's all, then."

Nick came from the booth, said a few words of explanation to the astonished clerk, and he then hurriedly left the store and hailed a passing taxicab.

Ten minutes later, still in disguise, he entered the quarters of the Imperial Loan Company—not more than an hour after his visit with Lord Waldmere.

The first person he caught sight of was Moses Hart, and he saw at once that Stuart Floyd had not yet arrived.

The assistant manager, nevertheless, appeared much more at ease than an hour ago. He was engaged in the latticed inclosure. He was smiling and humming a popular air. He saw Nick approach one of the windows and he turned to meet him.

"Is Mr. Garland busy?" Nick blandly inquired, bowing and smiling.

"Mr. Garland is absent just now," Hart suavely rejoined.

"H'm, is that so?"

"I think he will return before noon," Hart added. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Are you the assistant manager?"

"I am."

"Perhaps, then, you will do as well, though Mr. Garland was mentioned to me," said Nick. "It's about a loan I wish to negotiate on some valuable jewelry. The amount is considerable, and——"

"Ah!"

Hart breathed an expressive sigh, one of avaricious anticipation, and he then hastened to open a door leading into the inclosure.

"Walk in, sir," he said cordially. "Step into our private office. We then can discuss the matter without interruptions."

Nick was waiting only for an interruption.

"Oh, I don't think that will be necessary," he demurred. "I can tell you briefly what I require."

"Very well."

Hart stepped out and joined him.

"My name is Peterson," Nick continued. "I have in my charge a quantity of valuable jewelry. It is part of the estate of a very wealthy widow. The estate has not been settled, owing to long litigation, and it has become necessary to raise quite a sum of cash with which to meet legal expenses."

"I follow you," Hart nodded, anticipating an unusually profitable deal.

"I may require ten thousand dollars, possibly more."

"What is the value of the jewelry?"

"Fifty thousand, at least."

"Ah! In that case, Mr. Peterson, we will be delighted to accommodate you." Hart warmly assured him. "No loan is too large for us to make on satisfactory collateral. Our capital is unlimited. We can refer you to——"

He broke off abruptly.

Stuart Floyd had entered and was hurriedly approaching.

"One moment, Hart!" he exclaimed, diving into his coat pocket and failing to recognize Nick. "Excuse yourself for one moment. Here is that package which——"

"Let me have it, instead," Nick interrupted, thrusting Hart aside.

Floyd recoiled as if struck on the head.

"You!" he gasped involuntarily.

Nick whipped off his disguise.

"Yes," he said sternly. "I may need it to prove my case—and your relations with the Imperial Loan Company. Let me have it."

Floyd staggered and then uttered a cry and pulled himself together.

"Not by a long shot!" he shouted. "Get rid of this, Hart, before he can learn what it——"

But he got no further, for Nick Carter did not stand on ceremony. He leaped at Floyd and wrenched the package from him, as the latter was about to toss it to Hart, and then he forced him fiercely against the wall.

Then came the jingle and snapping of steel—and Floyd was in handcuffs.

"Let those keep you quiet," said Nick sharply. "I think, now, we are in a fair way to settle this business—and settle it right!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE LOOTING GAME.

The situation in which Chick Carter suddenly found himself with Lady Waldmere was not an enviable one. Without knowing just how it had come about, Chick realized on the instant that he was caught like a rat in a corner, the interior room having no window, nor any way of egress save through the door, then barred by the tall figure and threatening weapon of Morris Garland, to say nothing of the burly cabman behind him.

Chick was not blind, however, to one offsetting advantage the room afforded, or might possibly be made to afford. If he could escape only through the door, he also could be attacked only from that direction.

Chick took that in on the instant, also, and he was in

no mood to yield submissively to the two threatening miscreants in the hall.

He threw up his hands, nevertheless, while a shriek of terror came from Lady Waldmere—both sufficient to throw Garland off his guard for the fraction of a second.

Instantly Chick took advantage of it.

Without dropping his hands, lest the knave might shoot, Chick raised his right foot under one of the rounds of the chair on which he had been seated, then kicked it with all his strength straight at the open door.

It went direct and went like a flash.

It struck Garland squarely on the arm and breast, diverting his aim, and then fell to the floor.

Garland fired on the instant, nevertheless, and the bullet went into the ceiling.

Lady Waldmere uttered another shriek and fainted dead away on the bed.

The deafening report of the weapon was instantly followed by the bang of Chick's revolver, whipped like a flash from his hip pocket.

In his haste, however, he had fired almost at random. The bullet clipped a lock of hair from Garland's head, then passed within an inch of the cabman's ear.

Both uttered a yell. Both leaped instinctively, as it were, to one side of the open door, bringing the wall between them and the detective.

That was all that Chick wanted at that moment, and he had accomplished it by taking his life in his hand.

He now laughed aloud, however, and cried:

"Two can play at that game, you see. If either of you rats shows his head at the door, I'll not miss it with my next bullet."

This brought no response for a moment.

Chick heard the two men whispering in the hall, and also the rustle of skirts.

"By Jove, there may have been another woman in the house when I stole in," he said to himself, constantly alert. "She may have heard me, or saw me, and afterward sent word to Garland. That may be how they caught me in this fashion."

Chick's theory was quite nearly correct. As a matter of fact, a sister of Vera Vantoon, who had figured in the episode in the taxicab, had been left in the hurriedly rented furnished house, rented expressly after the abduction had been accomplished, in order that the identity of none of the culprits should afterward be discovered.

This sister, Leah Vantoon, had seen Chick stealing into the house. She later had stolen out and got word to Garland, happening to meet Vera and the chauffeur, then on their way to the house. All of them had stolen in and up the stairs, unheard by the detective, while Chick was talking with Lady Waldmere.

Morris Garland had, of course, then realized how craftily he had been duped by Nick Carter himself.

He did not realize it all, however, for Stuart Floyd and Moses Hart were at that moment under arrest by the famous detective.

Chick's taunting remark was answered in a few seconds by Garland.

At the same moment, too, Chick saw that Lady Waldmere had revived and was sitting on the edge of the bed. He held up his finger, warning her to be silent, then signed for her to seek a remote corner of the room, where a bullet from the hall could not possibly hit her.

He, in the meantime, remained crouching some six feet from the open door, revolver in hand.

"I say!" called Garland, from the hall.

"Say ahead," called Chick coolly. "Come on with it."

"You'd better quit and throw up your hands again," Garland advised.

"May they wither, Garland, if I do," replied Chick. "If you cannot think of anything better to say, you'd better keep quiet."

"Oh, we'll get you finally."

"Is that so?"

"You bet it's so. There is no way for you to get out."

"Not for you to get in," Chick retorted.

"We can starve you out."

"Not much."

"Think not, eh?"

"I know it," Chick declared confidently. "Before you could do that, Garland, the entire police force will be in search of me. They'll find me, too."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because your running mate in the game you have been playing will throw up his hands and squeal," Chick asserted. "He probably is under arrest by this time."

"By whom?" Garland demanded incredulously.

"By Nick Carter."

"I guess not. What do you mean by the game we've been playing?"

"Nick knows. He suspected it from the first."

"Knows what?"

Chick laughed and clicked the revolver suggestively.

"Don't come any nearer that door, Garland, or there'll be something doing," he advised. "I wouldn't shrink an instant from sending a bullet into your block of solid ivory. We've got your game down pat, now, and we're going to get you."

"What game?" Garland again demanded. "What do you mean?"

"Your looting game," said Chick. "That's a good name for it, too. You two rascals, evidently with others to help you, have taken advantage of the fact that the head of the business you only manage, Mr. Isaac Meyer, is a helpless paralytic and confined to his home."

"How taken advantage?"

"You have been looting his business of all that it would stand without immediate detection," said Chick. "You have been loaning small amounts on gems and jewels and the like, and then pawning the collateral elsewhere for a much larger sum, and whacking up the difference. When a customer shows up to redeem a pledge, if it happens to be one that you have put elsewhere, you stave him off until you can raise the dust to redeem it yourselves, in case you don't have it on hand, that you may turn it over to the proper owner and thus avert exposure. But it's bound to come, Garland; it's bound to come. In fact, it already is here."

"That's what Nick Carter suspects, is it?"

Garland spoke with a sneer, but his voice had a quaking uncertainty that told of utter dismay, of a realization that he had played a losing game and must pay the price.

"Sure that's what he suspects," Chick replied complacently. "You're a bunch of star looters, that's what you are. When the books and vaults of the Imperial Loan

Company are examined, you'll be found to be a hundred thousand short, at least."

"Confound you Carters, anyway!" Garland cried, with a snarl. "You know too much."

"Too much for most crooks whom we get after," Chick dryly admitted.

"It may cost you something one of these days."

"It already has cost you something," Chick retorted. "Nick tumbled to it almost off the reel. You were in pressing peril when the woman unexpectedly showed up to redeem her ten-thousand-dollar pledge. You have shoved up the jewels somewhere else, and probably for fifteen or twenty thousand. You did not have the jewels when she called yesterday, nor the money with which to redeem them this morning. Nick suspected it, Garland, and we got right at you to drive you to the wall. We have done it, all right."

Chick heard a growl from the cabman, one Buck Morgan, who had driven the taxicab the previous afternoon, and Chick also heard the remark that followed it.

"The cursed dick is right, Morris. We'd better make a quick get-away."

"Not on your life," snarled Garland. "I'll get him first, or—hark! What was that?"

There was little need to ask, nor had Morgan any time in which to answer the question.

The hurried tread of several men sounded in the lower hall and then on the near stairway. They came rushing up at top speed, Patsy Garvan in the lead.

"It's all off, Mr. Garland; all off!" he shouted, while he came, at the same time brandishing a ready revolver. "Don't attempt any funny business, or there'll be a dead pawnbroker here. Shut up, you two women, or we'll put you in irons with these two gazabos."

The raid, quietly made, indeed, as Nick had directed, was already a success. Both Garland and Morgan collapsed the moment they saw Patsy and the other detectives. They were capable of thieving and abduction, but not of murder and bloodshed.

Within five minutes Patsy had all four of the culprits in irons, and in five more they were on their way to the Tombs, to which Stuart Floyd and Hart already had preceded them.

Half an hour later Lady Waldmere was restored to the arms of her anxious husband, who, it seems needless to say, was jolly well pleased.

It later appeared that all of Nick Carter's suspicions, as set forth in brief by Chick, were entirely correct. Nick had felt reasonably sure of it from the first, but knew that he must secure absolute proof of it, which he set about doing in the manner described.

He knew that Garland and Hart would have to work lively to raise the money to recover the Waldmere jewels, that they might be turned over to her that morning, and that that was Garland's mission when he left his office with Vera Vantoon, afterward meeting Floyd.

That the latter then had undertaken the mission, and that he was in league with the others, became obvious to Nick when Floyd visited the jewelry firm. He rightly reasoned that Garland had provided him with a parcel of diamonds, or other costly gems, from those in pawn with the loan company, upon which Floyd could obtain a loan from the jeweler. It afterward was shown to be eighteen thousand dollars.

That Floyd then went and redeemed the jewels from the Crosstown Collateral Trust Company, Nick had not had a doubt, and he shaped his course accordingly, meeting with complete success and later showing that Mr. Isaac Meyer had, indeed, been almost utterly ruined by his treacherous managers.

"They now will get theirs," Nick observed, speaking of the case that evening. "I have no doubt that Floyd was the genius back of the whole job, but we may not be able to prove even that. However, be that as it may, it was very quick work, cleaned up within twenty-four hours."

"Yes, chief," supplemented Patsy. "And as his blooming English nobs would say, and has said—deucedly keen and clevah work, bah Jove, deucedly keen and clevah!"

THE END.

Some men are never beaten, regardless how great may be the odds against them. Such was the case of Stuart Floyd, notwithstanding the fact that Nicholas Carter had succeeded in bringing him to justice, the clever rogue was to give the famous detective another battle of wits, which you will read about in "The Melting Pot; or, Nick Carter and the Waldmere Plate," which will appear in the next issue, No. 140, of the NICK CARTER STORIES, out May 15th.

Dared for Los Angeles.

By ROLAND ASHFORD PHILLIPS.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 134 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CONFESSION.

It was a long time before either Miss Trask or Nash spoke again. The girl was sitting, wet-eyed and silent, in the chair, the book open upon her lap. Nash had walked to the window, and stood gazing out upon the road, which, under the magic of the moonlight, wound along the slope like a wide, silver ribbon.

The notes of a song came faintly through the still night air; in a neighboring cabin some of the men were making merry. The words were silly and meaningless, the tune of a dance-hall variety. Yet both the girl and Nash waited until the song was finished.

Then resolutely Nash turned.

"How long have you been here, Miss Trask?"

"In California? Only a few months. I—I came from New York immediately after my brother was buried. I had given him this book only at Christmas. Out of all his effects—I kept it. I was living at a little hotel near Central Park, and used to go over and pass away the hours reading. I suppose I dropped it—and that man who spoke to you must have picked it up."

"What led you to take up—this work?" Nash asked.

"I—don't know. Maybe it was because—because I had hopes of finding my brother's murderer."

"You knew him?"

She shook her head. "No. Oh, I hadn't any set plan. I just imagined, somehow, that on this great engineering project I might come face to face with the man who——"

"And if you had?" Nash interrupted.

A quick, hard light flamed to her eyes, only to die away as suddenly as it had come. "I don't know," she faltered. "I am only a woman, and——"

"Did it ever occur to you, Miss Trask," Nash ventured to ask, "that your brother might have been as much to blame as—the other man?"

"But—but he was my brother," she replied.

"Of course." Nash smiled faintly. "A year ago, Miss Trask, I worked on the New York Aqueduct."

"You?" She raised her eyes quickly. "Then maybe you knew——"

"Your brother?" Nash nodded. "Yes, I knew him."

"And you knew about—about his death? You have heard how a man shot him, and——"

"I did not know of his death," Nash answered gravely. "That is, I was not positive."

She was facing him now. "How strangely you talk, Mr. Nash!"

"Possibly it is because I am placed in a strange position." Nash replied.

She started to speak, then stopped. The chugging of a motor interrupted, and instinctively both man and woman understood. Nash stepped swiftly to the window. The flashing lights of a big car were dancing down the road.

"It—it's the officers!" the girl exclaimed. She had followed the engineer, and was peering over his shoulder.

"I'm afraid so," Nash responded.

"They've come to-night—instead of in the morning. They must have suspected you would try to escape."

Nash dropped the curtain and went back to the table.

"It's too—too late for you to get away now," she stammered, breathing hard. "What—what are you going to do?"

"That isn't the question which troubles me," Nash said quietly. "How are you to explain your presence here?"

"I won't need to," she retorted.

"Oh, but you will have to. You are employed by these people. Do you want them to suspect you of double-dealing? Remember, Miss Trask, it is the law you are fighting now."

"I shall tell them the truth."

"You must tell them that you came here—to arrest me. I am your prisoner. You must tell them that."

"I won't!" she exclaimed.

"You must do this, Miss Trask. You must protect yourself."

"I will tell them it is all a mistake—that you are innocent," she said. "I will tell them that you are not the man they want."

"What good will it do?" Nash asked. "What good, Miss Trask? You have no proofs."

"Oh, but I cannot tell them what you wish me to!" she protested, over and over again. "I cannot!"

"Listen to me, Miss Trask," Nash answered, speaking swiftly now, for the pounding of the motor on the up grade was becoming more and more distinct. "It is the right way—the only way. It will protect your reputation. Think of what it all means. You have informed them of my supposedly crooked dealings, and now they discover you in my cabin—apparently aiding me to escape. Can't you understand what a serious matter it will be?"

"But I refuse to tell them that I——"

The machine had stopped outside of the door. In another moment the detectives would be inside the cabin. There was but one method open to Nash; it was a brutal one, but to clear the girl's name, he resolved to take it.

"Miss Trask," he said, "you must not help me. You must do as I have said. A moment ago you told me that there was but one object which led you to accept this work. Well, you have succeeded. I am the man you wanted to find."

She stared at him dully, unable to grasp his meaning. Footsteps came heavily across the board porch.

"I—I don't understand!" she gasped. "I don't——"

Nash clenched his hands. "Miss Trask—I am the man who shot your brother. Now you must do as I say."

The color drained from her face and she sank back against the wall, as if Nash's declaration had been a stinging lash. Her lips moved, but no sound issued from them. Then, reverberating in the silence, came a loud knock upon the door. It was not answered. A second one came, louder and more determined.

"Come in!" Nash said.

The door was thrown open, and two men stepped inside. They were both strangers to Nash.

While one of the men stood near the door, as if to prevent any escape, the other moved warily toward Nash.

"Are you Elliot Nash?" he demanded.

"I am," the engineer responded.

"Then I'm sorry to say I've a warrant here for your arrest." As he spoke he drew back his coat, and Nash found himself looking upon a detective's badge.

Nash only smiled, and looked across at the girl, who all this time had been standing weakly against the wall.

"I'm afraid you're too late, gentlemen," he announced. "I have already surrendered to Miss Breen."

Both men looked toward the girl. Then the spokesman laughed, and nodded, apparently acquainted with her.

"Well, congratulations, Miss Breen," he said. "You have got your nerve, haven't you? Wanted all the honors in this deal, eh? Leave it to a woman every time," he added, in an undertone.

Nash flashed a curious glance at the girl. He wondered how she would accept the situation, and he had not long to wait. She drew herself erect, and a trace of color stole into her cheeks.

"You may take Mr. Nash to the city with you," she said, her voice never more calm. "I—I will appear against him in the morning. Good night, gentlemen."

She walked across the floor, drawing on her heavy riding gloves. Then she stepped out into the night.

Presently the sharp thudding of her pony's hoofs sounded clearly upon the hard road. Minute by minute they died away, and when they had been swallowed by the night's silence, Nash, for the first time in months, felt a great, crushing sense of loneliness.

The girl had gone—out of his life—forever. And, somehow, he had begun to have a deeper feeling than that of mere friendship toward her. He had even begun to dream those glorious, rose-colored dreams which come to all men, soon or late.

And what an end they had come to! His air castles were toppling about his shoulders.

To-morrow she would appear against him before the engineering board in Los Angeles. He would face her—not as a man wrongly accused of betraying his city, but as a self-confessed murderer of her brother—a creature to be despised and shunned.

She, whom once he thought would champion his cause, and fight for the opportunity to undo what she at first fancied was her duty, would now be only too glad to see him condemned.

And so this was to be the end of everything, he soliloquized bitterly. All his efforts and endeavors were to go for naught. He would be made an example of before the whole State of California.

"What a penalty!" he murmured to himself.

"We want to get that midnight train from San Fernando," the detective said sharply.

"I am ready," Nash responded quietly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BEFORE THE BOARD.

At ten o'clock the following morning Nash was ushered into the big directors' room, where the governing board of aqueduct engineers was to pass judgment.

The two detectives had brought him into San Fernando by automobile, and they had been just in time to catch the last train to Los Angeles. Despite the cloud which hung over his head, Nash had been treated with the utmost consideration.

Very little sleep came to him in the few remaining hours of the night. He was well aware of the serious situation, and tried to fix upon some definite method of procedure. The examining board would expect him to defend himself. He resolved to tell the whole truth, from the very day he discovered the letter in the book of verse to the present. As for proofs, one way or another, he could offer nothing better than his word.

It was a beautiful, balmy morning when he walked down Spring Street in the custody of the two detectives, a morning such as only Los Angeles can boast of—tempered by ocean breezes, and with the air heavy with the perfume of orange blossoms. Nash drank deep of the sunshine; how marvelous it seemed; doubly so now, when his liberty might be but a question of——

Before they reached the new city hall on South Broadway a half dozen newspaper men were trailing them; a camera or two appeared. Somehow, the news of Nash's arrest and the expected upheaval in Camp Forty-seven had reached the ears of the vigilant press.

The chimes on the city-hall tower were striking eleven when Nash finally took the seat set aside for him in the big directors' room. The majority of the engineers were gathered about the long table, waiting.

Nash was surprised to see at the far end the familiar face of Jim Sigsbee. The politician had evidently decided to forego his proposed trip to San Francisco and remain on the scene.

The preliminaries were brief and to the point.

"Our private detective in this affair, Miss Breen, has not shown up," the spokesman of the board announced gravely, "but we can proceed. The prisoner is probably aware of the nature of the crime for which he has been arrested."

Nash admitted that he understood.

The president of the board continued: "What have you to say in your defense, Mr. Nash?"

Nash got to his feet and calmly faced the assembly.

"Upon my arrival in this city, gentlemen, I happened upon a letter directed to a Mr. Hooker, at that time the foreman of Camp Forty-seven. The man to whom the note was issued did not care for the position. As no names were mentioned, I took the letter, gave it to Mr. Hooker, and was engaged."

"This letter," interrupted the president, "was written by whom?"

"By Mr. Sigsbee."

Finding himself the center of all eyes, Sigsbee nodded.

"I remember giving a letter to a man who claimed to be an Eastern engineer," he explained. "He pleaded so hard for a position that I offered him a chance on Camp Forty-seven."

Nash was asked to continue.

"I began in the camp as a sort of clerk," he said. "After a week, because I proved my value, I was made a subforeman, and given charge of the conduit construction. One day, when Mr. Hooker was—ill, I helped the city inspector check over the pay roll. Having kept a memorandum of my own, I found it differed from the foreman's statement to the extent of being just about half of the amount that——"

Sigsbee was instantly upon his feet.

"That's a lie, gentlemen!" he cried. "You all know me better than that. Why, it was at my instigation that this engineer was charged with——"

Nash ignored the politician's interruption and continued his remarks directly to the president. "When I threatened to inform the authorities of the truth, Mr. Hooker asked me to call upon Mr. Sigsbee. I did so. Mr. Sigsbee, instead of discharging me, as I had expected, admitted things were not as they should be, placed the blame on his foreman's shoulders, and offered me the position, with the understanding that I should be directly responsible, and that Camp Forty-seven was to be forever above suspicion."

The engineers were paying close attention, and appeared to be convinced of Nash's statements. Sigsbee was still on his feet, and when Nash had finished he spoke again.

"Gentlemen," he began smilingly, "you have all known me, most of you, for the past ten years. You all know how faithfully I have worked that this great waterway might be made an actuality. The insinuations just now cast upon myself and upon the affairs of Camp Forty-seven are absurd. I was attracted to Mr. Nash by his apparent knowledge of engineering matters, his earnestness, and the fact that he was a native of this city. Mr. Hooker was ill, and had long before asked for a vacation. I considered it my opportunity, and made the change. There were no hard feelings at all, I can assure you. I would like to ask Mr. Nash, if I may, what proofs he is prepared to offer to substantiate his claims."

Nash realized his helplessness. Sigsbee must have known, too, otherwise he would never have asked the question.

"I have no proofs, gentlemen," he declared, "other than my word."

Sigsbee smiled, and sat down. The president nodded for the engineer to resume.

"I accepted the position as foreman of Camp Forty-seven, and since then have worked faithfully in the discharge of my duties. The specifications given me by Mr. Sigsbee have been followed to the letter. I had no suspicions as to the trick being played upon me until Miss Breen arrested me last night."

"What trick was played upon you?" asked the president.

"Changing the specifications," Nash answered. "False ones were given me. I followed them. When I attempted to prove my innocence to Miss Breen I found they had been taken and the rightful ones substituted."

"Did those specifications come from the board, Mr. Sigsbee?" the president inquired.

"Certainly, sir." Sigsbee nodded. "If I am not mistaken, they are now in Mr. Nash's cabin, on file. Are they not, Mr. Nash?"

"They were placed there some time yesterday afternoon, by Mr. Hooker," Nash responded.

Sigsbee looked around at the circle of anxious faces and shook his head. "Did you ever hear of a more absurd statement, gentlemen?" he asked solicitously. "Why, the thing is farcical!"

By their expressions, the men about the table seemed to agree with Sigsbee. The president spoke again, after the interval:

"I suppose, Mr. Nash, you have proofs to substantiate these claims against Mr. Sigsbee?"

"As the false specifications are gone, I am unable to give you any," Nash responded. "Mr. Sigsbee and his confederate, Mr. Hooker, have planned a shrewd game, and have left few loopholes. As the matter stands at the present I am helpless."

Sigsbee was upon his feet instantly, his cheeks flaming. "I won't stand for such insinuations!" he roared. "I won't stand for a man of Mr. Nash's reputation to——"

The president of the board put up his hand. "Just a moment, Mr. Sigsbee," he cautioned. "I think we can straighten out this matter with the aid of these new witnesses."

The door had opened. Every eye in the room instantly turned. Miss Breen and Hooker advanced into the room and were seated.

Miss Breen and Hooker! Nash felt the hot blood mount to his temples. So she had gone over to the other side! He knew she must do so, yet, deep in his heart, he hoped——

Miss Trask, or Miss Breen, as she was known to all the men in the room, save one, did not look in Nash's direction. She appeared unusually pale and concerned.

"We have been waiting for you, Miss Breen," the president announced. "Our evidence appears to be somewhat confused. Will you kindly state your knowledge of the affair to the board?"

Miss Trask arose, facing the president. Her voice was low and evenly pitched, and never once did she falter.

"I became acquainted with Mr. Nash through an accident, and in his company, later, I was taken around the camp. One day he allowed me to inspect the steel sections on the Soledad Siphon. Unknown to him, I measured the steel, and later on compared the measurements with the specifications. It was then I learned the truth; that the steel he had been using was a quarter of an inch too thin. I then reported the facts."

Nash listened eagerly. Miss Trask's declaration explained her actions and questions that day when he had willingly guided her about the camp.

"Have you any answer to make, Mr. Nash?" the president asked.

"None whatever," Nash answered quietly. "Miss Breen has told you the whole truth. I have not denied that my steel was a quarter of an inch too thin."

For the smallest part of a minute Miss Trask allowed her eyes to rest upon him. Nash's heart responded. Was it possible that he could read within those depths a message of——

Hooker was called upon. The president handed him a copy of the true specifications.

"These are similar to the ones you delivered to Mr. Nash?"

Hooker nodded. "Yes, sir."

"Mr. Nash claims you changed the copies yesterday afternoon," the president declared. "That you took the false ones and substituted these."

"Such an idea never entered my head," replied Hooker. "Where were you yesterday afternoon?"

"I was in Camp Forty-seven for about an hour."

"To see whom?"

"Mr. Nash. He was out. I waited around a short time and finally left in Mr. Sigsbee's machine."

Sigsbee was plainly nervous. His fingers were drumming upon his chair arm, and he shifted about uncomfortably.

"Where did you go from Camp Forty-seven?" the president asked.

"Up the usual road."

"But you only arrived in Los Angeles this morning, I understand."

"Yes, sir. About two miles below the camp my gasoline tank sprang a leak, and I was forced to spend the night at the Elkhorn Ranch."

"That is where Miss Breen is staying, is it not?"

"Yes, sir. She came in with me this morning."

Sigsbee was ready to interrupt once more. He seemed particularly anxious to have Hooker silent.

"Gentlemen of the board," he began impressively, "it seems to me that all the necessary arguments have been heard. Miss Breen has testified, and also Mr. Hooker. Both parties are known to you, and you must be forced to admit that the claims suggested by Mr. Nash are not alone preposterous, but impossible as well."

The president nodded, and many of the others did the same.

"Then I move that we hold Mr. Nash guilty of the charges brought against him, and turn him over for trial before the proper authorities," Sigsbee resumed.

The president of the board hesitated a moment. "There are a number of points which do not seem quite clear to me as they stand, but which will probably come to light during the trial. However, to me, at least, Mr. Nash appears to be prompt with his answers, and, to all appearances, telling a straightforward story. Of course, his word, against——"

Sigsbee interrupted. "One moment, if I may. It seems that Mr. Nash is unable to give us any proofs as to the existence of these so-called frauds, and perhaps, if we are to weigh his words with any consideration at all, we might ask him why he left a responsible position in New York and came here to Los Angeles, willing to accept a minor one."

Nash's fingers clenched themselves. He had been fearing that question, not so much because of himself as because of Miss Trask.

"When we are to consider a man's word, and weigh it conscientiously," Sigsbee went on to say, "we ought to convince ourselves that his past is one to warrant it."

He turned directly to Nash.

"Perhaps you will tell us why you left the New York Aqueduct so abruptly, Mr. Nash?"

"That has nothing to do with the charge you are bringing against me," Nash answered hotly.

"Oh, hasn't it?" Sigsbee sneered. "Well, perhaps the gentlemen of this board will think differently. Perhaps you do not relish the idea of telling them that you are a murderer! That you left New York to escape paying the penalty."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE UNEXPECTED.

The effect of Sigsbee's declaration upon the rest of the listeners was dynamic. Every eye swung around and rested upon Nash's white face.

"What have you to say, Mr. Nash?" the president questioned, first to find his voice.

"I have nothing to say," replied Nash.

"But I have!" a clear, commanding voice arose.

Nash lifted his eyes. Miss Trask, who had so abruptly interrupted, was upon her feet. She looked at the president, who appeared to be as much surprised as the others.

"May I explain?" she asked.

The president nodded. Sigsbee brought himself erect in his chair, a frown chiseled between his brows.

"Why, surely, Miss Breen," he said anxiously, "this affair cannot interest you."

"On the contrary, Mr. Sigsbee, it is of vital interest to me," she answered swiftly. "The man whom you have accused Mr. Nash of murdering was my brother!"

Sigsbee could only sit and gasp; the others about the long table leaned forward in their chairs. So abrupt and startling was the announcement that in the hush which followed one might have heard the dropping of a pin.

"Your brother?" It was the president who first regained his voice.

"Yes," said Miss Trask.

"And this man"—indicating Nash—"this man killed him?"

"That is what Mr. Sigsbee would have us believe," the girl answered quietly.

"But we have it from his own lips," broke in Hooker, who, up to the present, had remained dumb. "Nash told me himself that——"

"I know." Miss Trask nodded. "I, too, have heard it from his own lips. He told me last night—just before the detectives arrived from Los Angeles."

"And he knew, at the time, that you intended arresting him?" asked the president.

"Yes."

"Then why——"

"Why am I defending him??" Miss Trask interrupted. "Because there has been a mistake—a horrible mistake. Mr. Nash is as innocent of the crime as any one in the room."

Nash caught at his breath, staring dumbly, wonderingly, into her face. What motive, he asked himself, had prompted Miss Trask to change so abruptly?

"Until this morning—an hour ago," Miss Trask continued, "I believed his confession. Then I received a wire from New York saying that one of the aqueduct engineers, dying, has confessed to the murder. I did not understand at first, but after a time it became clear to me. Mr. Nash had a quarrel with my brother; a gun was fired somehow. The shot cut across my brother's cheek. I distinctly remember, because he was brought home, and remained there for a week. Two weeks later he was engaged in another fight—and this one proved fatal. Mr. Nash believed all the time—as I did at first—that he was responsible; that it was in his quarrel my brother had met his death. My brother was quick-tempered, and he provoked the fight. I want Mr. Nash to be freed of all blame."

Nash listened as a man in a dream, and finally, when Miss Trask had finished, and had smiled upon him, he spoke:

"The fight took place in a café," he said, bringing back the vivid picture. "It was a harmless one at first. We began sparring; he dropped to the floor. Then he jerked out a gun—I was unarmed. But suddenly a shot rang out behind me, your brother cried out, and when I looked down his face was bathed in crimson. Somebody grabbed me, forced me out of the room. They told me my opponent was dying, and that I must run for it. Explanations were useless." Nash stopped, and looked around at the circle of interested faces.

"That—that is all," he said, "except that I packed my things that night and took the first train for California."

With the exception of Sigsbee and Hooker, the others in the room were visibly impressed. Sigsbee, instantly aware that the issue at hand was being forgotten, got to his feet.

"A very remarkable little romance," he sneered. "Very remarkable, indeed! But I'm afraid we are wandering from the subject. While Miss Breen has apparently proven that Mr. Nash did not murder her brother, the fact remains that he was a trouble-maker, and——"

"Just a moment, Mr. Sigsbee," interrupted Miss Trask. "Whatever Mr. Nash did in the past is of no concern at the present time. May I have permission to speak at length?" She looked over at the president, who, understanding, nodded.

"Since I became engaged upon this case, gentlemen," she continued, "I have had the opportunity of learning a few unexpected truths. Convinced, as I was at first, of Mr. Nash's disloyalty, I was amazed at his manner toward me and the men under him, and his enthusiasm for his work. It was only after a severe struggle with myself, and after I had found what I concluded was the final proof of his unfaithfulness, that I took up the matter with the board of engineers."

"Do we understand that you retract the evidence you have only just offered?" demanded the president.

"Certainly not, Mr. President," she answered. "Every word I have said in the matter of the siphons is true. Even Mr. Nash agrees with me."

Nash nodded. "I have denied nothing," he said. "Miss Breen's statements are perfectly correct."

In a puzzled way he waited for her to continue.

"Several days ago Mr. Nash saved my life," the girl resumed. "It was then, half crazed by what I had gone through, that I confessed everything to him. I told him who I was, and what I had done."

"That was before his arrest?" leaped to Sigsbee's lips.

"Yes, before his arrest."

Sigsbee shrugged. "It's a wonder, carried away by your feelings for this man, that you didn't urge him to escape," he said.

"That is exactly what I did do, Mr. Sigsbee."

The politician stared. "You—you tried to——"

"I told him the truth, and urged him to get away before he was arrested. Not only then did I plead with him, but I went into camp an hour before his arrest and begged him to leave."

"What prevented him from doing so?" asked the president.

Miss Breen smiled. "His innocence, gentlemen. Why, do you think, being guilty of this crime, he would have remained in camp? It was because he was innocent that he remained."

"Do you mean to say, Miss Breen," the president asked, "that you believe Mr. Nash was ignorant of the offense for which——"

"I do!"

"But you have already testified——" began Sigsbee.

"I testified to the facts exactly as they were, exactly as I found them; exactly, gentlemen, as Mr. Nash admits they were. He does not deny that his steel was different from the specifications. What he does deny is that he was given those specifications there on the table."

"If he was given other specifications, which he claims to have followed," Sigsbee declared, "why does he not show them? What we want at this inquiry is proofs, not words."

Miss Breen allowed her eyes to rest upon the insolent, flushed face of the speaker. "Why doesn't he show the proofs?' you ask," she replied calmly. "Because you took particular pains to put them out of his reach, Mr. Sigsbee."

"Look here!" Sigsbee exclaimed, forgetting, or indifferent to the fact, that he was addressing a woman. "I won't stand for any such insinuations!"

"You'll stand for some things you don't expect," the girl answered swiftly, not in the least ruffled by the man's declaration. "You laid your plans very carefully, Mr. Sigsbee; you imagined them to be perfect. Most criminals do. It is the unexpected that steps in and clogs the smoothest running gear."

"I—I demand——" spluttered the politician.

"Very well," announced the girl, apparently enjoying the situation, which to all others in the room, Nash included, was more than mystifying. "I'll satisfy you."

She looked around at the circle of interested engineers. Nash found her eyes, and held them. Something mirrored in their depths sent his pulses racing.

"Last night, after leaving Mr. Nash in charge of the detectives," she resumed, "I rode back to the ranch. Arrived there, I found Mr. Hooker, who, as he has previously explained, was preparing to stop overnight. When I discovered him he was flat on his back under the machine, coat off, sleeves rolled up, his hands covered with grease and dirt. At his suggestion, I volunteered to hold the lantern, and later he asked me to carry his coat into the house. I did so. As I picked up the garment from the ground, some papers dropped out. I was on the point of returning them when——"

Hooker, with a loud cry, suddenly leaped to his feet, flung aside the chair in which he had been sitting, and which blocked his way, and bolted for the door.

"Don't let him get away!" Miss Breen cried.

Instantly several of the men sprang into action, and two of them caught Hooker as he was about to disappear. They brought him back to the table, and forced him into a chair, where he sat huddled, white-lipped and trembling.

"I'm sorry Mr. Hooker spoiled my climax," Miss Breen said, smiling. "Evidently he has just searched his pockets, and discovered the false specifications which he took from Mr. Nash's cabin yesterday afternoon are missing. However," she added, opening a little hand bag which she carried, "they are not lost. Here, gentlemen, are Mr. Nash's proofs."

A bomb, thrown through the window, would not have caused greater confusion. The false specifications were hurriedly examined by all the men. Nash's writing and figures on the margins were instantly identified.

Sigsbee, stunned by the unexpected twist in his carefully laid plot, sat as one stricken dumb.

"What have you to say, Mr. Hooker?" asked the president, after the excitement had subsided

Hooker seemed to realize his hopeless position. His actions had proven his guilt. "Camp Forty-seven was rotten with graft," he said reluctantly, dully. "Sigsbee and I had to throw the blame on some one's shoulders—so we picked Nash. That's all."

The president of the board walked over to Nash. "I guess there's a great big apology coming to you, Mr. Nash." He gripped the engineer's hand. "I feel we can depend upon you, and I hope you will continue to represent us in Camp Forty-seven."

"I shall do my best," Nash answered. "My motto has been, and always will be, 'All for Los Angeles.'"

"That must be our motto as well," responded the president. "And with this in view, we must be careful not to allow the faintest whisper of this meeting to reach the ears of the public. Los Angeles has always been free from graft and political deals. It must be kept so. The public must have the utmost confidence in the men who are constructing its wonderful aqueduct. I believe all the members present understand the delicate situation And as for these two gentlemen"—he looked across to Sigsbee and Hooker—"we must see that they are sent away. We will withdraw all charges against them. To air this matter in court would be a detriment to our clean record of the past. And while these men deserve punishment, severe punishment, we must consider, above all else, the welfare of our city. Therefore, I move that these men be placed in the custody of a detective and taken East."

The suggestion of the president was unanimously upheld by the board of engineers.

Following the verdict, Nash slipped away and found Miss Trask.

"If it hadn't been for you," he murmured, pressing her hand, "I might——"

"If it hadn't been for you," she interrupted, "that night at the coyote I might have——"

The remembrance of that night, and the one particular incident, rushed to Nash's mind.

"And why—why did you lie to me about the time?" he asked. "Why did you wish to remain with me when you knew that the explosion was to——"

She looked away, and the color trembled in her cheeks. "C-can't you guess?" she faltered.

Nash had arrived at a solution a long time previous to this moment, but it seemed too good to be true. Now he knew it was true.

"Let's go over to the Alexandria for lunch," he suggested. "I can talk better there."

And, once in that big, cosmopolitan hotel, and in a

secluded corner of the grillroom, Elliot Nash amazed the stolid-faced waiter by his order. And what he said later to the girl who shared the feast was meant only for her ears.

THE END.

AN IMPORTANT EXCEPTION.

An old man who entered the meteorological office, the other day, said:

"This 'ere's where you give out weather predictions, ain't it?"

The clerk nodded.

"Well," continued the old man, "I thought as how I could come up and give you some tips."

"Yes," said the clerk politely.

"Yes; I've thought it out a little, an' I find that ye ain't al'ays right."

"No; we sometimes make mistakes."

"Course ye do. We all does, some time. Now, I was thinkin' as how a line that used to be on the auction handbills down in our county might do first-rate on your weather predictions an' save ye a lot of explainin'."

"What was the line?"

"Wind an' weather permittin'."

He went off without waiting to say good-by.

Saving the Building and Loan Money.

By E. E. YOUMANS.

"Paul, I want you to go down to the Building and Loan with this money to-night," said Mrs. Brown, as she came into the room where her son was seated, reading a book. "I'd go myself, but I expect Mrs. Carson here to see me, and must be on hand when she comes. I guess you can attend to it all right enough, don't you think so?"

"Sure," said the youth, laying aside his book; "I'll start at once."

He secured his hat, and prepared to leave.

"Look out you don't lose the money," cautioned his mother. "There are some fifty dollars in the roll."

"No fear," answered Paul; and a moment later he was on his way down the road.

The place where the Building and Loan Association met was at a small village, some two miles from Mrs. Brown's farm, and it was necessary for Paul to pass through a lonely woods on the way.

This he did not mind, however, for he was used to the road, and had often gone through the woods at night. It was just turning dusk when he left the house, but before he reached the forest, darkness had fallen in full.

The moon did not rise till late, and he could not see far ahead when he passed in under the trees. But he pressed on, the money tucked safely away in the inside of his vest, and had just reached the end of the woods, when the sudden glimmer of a light in the edge of the trees attracted his attention.

"Why, that's near the old cave," muttered the boy, stopping and looking toward the gleam. "Wonder what it means?"

He was about passing on, when the impulse to go forward and investigate seized upon him, and he turned toward the cave.

"It won't take but a minute," he told himself. "I'll just sneak up near enough to see who's prowling around. It may be some of the boys, though it's been a long time since any of us have been down this way."

He climbed over the fence, and stole toward the light. It was still shining, but before he got halfway to it, it suddenly went out.

He kept on, however, and soon reached the vicinity of the cave. This was situated in a small and rocky ravine, and had been formed by several large bowlders rolling down from the sides of the gorge, and lodging in such a manner as to leave a considerable cavity underneath.

Paul and his friends had for a long time used this place as a sort of rendezvous in some of their sports. But they had lost interest in it, and had not been there for some time.

In a few minutes he was near enough to the cave to hear the sound of strange voices.

"That's none of the fellows," he muttered, beginning to feel a little uneasy. "But who can it be?"

He paused for a moment in uncertainty. Then his curiosity urged him on again, and he soon gained a position behind one of the bowlders that formed a side of the cave.

Here he crouched down, and listened. In a little while the party within began talking again.

"There's no doubt about it. He'll have all the money with him, and, if we're smart, we'll make a clean haul of three or four thousand dollars."

"All the same, it's blamed risky," said another voice.

"Well, what of it? I reckon we're smart enough to make our escape. We'll just stay here till twelve or one o'clock, then we'll make tracks for Bolton's house. Take my word for it, bub, he'll never put that money in the bank to-morrow."

Paul almost betrayed his proximity by the start he gave as these words reached his ears. Mr. Bolton was the treasurer of the Building and Loan Association into which he was going to pay the fifty dollars that night, and these two men were concocting a scheme to rob him at his home.

The youth soon decided what to do. He must hurry away at once, and tell the treasurer what he had discovered.

"It's the greatest piece of rascality I ever heard of," thought Paul, as he cautiously rose to his feet and turned away.

But he was not destined to escape. He stepped upon a small stone which slid out from under his foot with a sharp noise, and nearly threw him down.

"What's that?" cried one of the men, and the next second both were heard starting from the cave.

Paul did not wait. Knowing he was sure to be caught, he broke into a run.

The next moment the men saw him, and started in pursuit with a shout of rage.

"Stop, you young eavesdropper," cried the foremost ruffian; "stop, I say, or I'll shoot you."

Paul paid no attention. He dashed back toward the road, expecting to have a bullet sent after him each moment, but for some reason it did not come.

Straining every muscle, he soon came near the fence, and at the same moment he heard the pursuers close behind him. He had no time to climb the fence, and gathered himself for a spring.

When he reached it, he placed his hand on the top rail, and made a tremendous leap. He would have cleared it all right, but the rail gave way under him, and he fell headlong into the grass on the roadside.

He sprang up, but it was too late. A heavy hand was laid on his collar, and he was jerked violently around.

"Now I've got you," said a rough voice. "I've a good mind to break your head."

"Let me go!" panted Paul.

"I'll let you go, confound you," roared his captor, shaking him savagely. "Who are you?"

"None of your business," said Paul fearlessly. "If you don't let me go, it'll be worse for you."

"Careful with that tongue of yours. Just come along back here."

With a quick move the youth struck the man a stinging blow in the face. The ruffian uttered a howl, and put up his hand. Paul broke loose, and dashed away.

"Stop him, Dick," cried the fellow he had hit. "Shoot him down; don't let him escape."

Paul was running for all he was worth. Dick promptly gave chase. He was a good runner, and, despite the boy's desperate exertion, rapidly overhauled him.

When he got near enough he struck at the boy with his fist, and once more Paul sprawled into the road. He was partially stunned, and, before he could recover, both men were upon him.

"Let me smash him," cried the one savagely. "He nearly broke my nose. Just let me get at him."

"Oh, what's the use!" said the other. "We've no time to fool with him. Give me your handkerchief."

The man did so, and in a few minutes Paul's hands were secured behind him, he was lifted between them, and carried back to the cave.

Here he was laid down, and Dick began searching him.

"We may as well take whatever you've got of value," he said. "We deserve something for that blasted run you gave us."

Paul's heart sank. His mother's hard-earned fifty dollars would be stolen.

The man soon found the book and the bills, and chuckled as he saw the money. Then, by the light of the lantern which he had relighted, he examined the book, and uttered a low whistle.

"Well, I'll be hanged, Joe," he cried, "if here isn't one o' the Buildin' and Loan books; fifty dollars along with it, too, by the great thunder! Well, youngster, we'd only get this money anyhow, so we'll take it now. Wish we could get all that'll be paid in to-night as easy as we get this."

He put the bills into his pocket, after which Paul was thrown into the cave. A large stone lying near was rolled against the entrance, and Paul's capture was complete.

Hour after hour passed till the boy knew it must be after midnight. Then the men prepared to leave.

"I reckon you'll be comfortable there for some time, bub," said one, as they moved away. "You can thank your lucky stars that we didn't kill you."

The next moment they were gone. Paul tugged at the bandage confining his wrists.

"I must get away and warn Mr. Bolton," he reflected excitedly. "They may kill him."

But the handkerchief was well tied, and he could not weaken it.

"What shall I do?" he cried desperately. "I must get away."

Then an idea flashed into his mind. He rolled over, with his back against the rock, and, despite the pain, began rubbing the handkerchief against it.

His hands were soon bruised and bleeding, but he kept on, until finally the linen was worn through, and dropped off.

He groped his way to the entrance, and tried to move the rock. He could not budge it. He sank back again with a groan of dismay.

"Too bad," was his despairing cry. "I can't get out, after all. The men must be almost there now. If——"

He thrust his hand into his pocket, and uttered a low cry. They had not robbed him of his jackknife, and he soon had it out, digging away the dirt for life.

How the boy worked! In half an hour he had dug a large cavity under one side of the stone, and a hard push sent it over so that he managed to squeeze through on the other side, and crawl from the cave.

Then off he started across fields for the house of Gilbert, the town marshal. He had to cross a brook, but he did not lose time. He waded through, and, with the water dripping from his garments, reached the marshal's house ten minutes later.

As soon as possible that individual was aroused, and Paul told his story.

"Hurry," he concluded. "You may be too late."

In less than five minutes they were hurrying toward the treasurer's home. The marshal had two revolvers, one of which he handed to Paul.

"Don't be afraid to use it," he said, and a few minutes after they came in sight of Mr. Bolton's house.

They looked cautiously around as they approached, but all was silent. Evidently the thieves had not arrived yet.

When they reached the house, the marshal rang the bell long and hard. A moment later an upper window was raised, and Mr. Bolton called out:

"Who's there?"

"It's I, Gus," said the marshal, stepping back and looking up. "Come down, quick as you can, and open the door."

Mr. Bolton knew the officer, and lost no time in admitting him.

"What is up?" he asked, when they were all inside.

The officer explained:

"They'll be here soon," he concluded. "We must be ready for 'em."

Hasty preparations were made. Believing that the thieves were acquainted with Mr. Bolton's house, the officer concluded they would force an entrance into the room where the treasurer kept his safe, and to this apartment they all repaired.

A large, high-backed sofa was drawn up under the gas jet, the gas was lighted and turned down low, and the three watchers crouched down behind the safe.

"We'll wait till they get in the room," said the officer; "then I'll give you a nudge, Paul, and you must turn on the gas in full. Bolton and I will cover 'em with our revolvers, and if they don't surrender, we'll let 'em have it."

Paul was much excited. But he tried to remember what the marshal had told him, and held himself in readiness to turn on the gas when the signal was given.

Suddenly a slight noise was heard near the window.

"Hist!" said the officer. "There they are!"

Two or three peculiar scratches were heard, then the sash was carefully raised. In a moment the men climbed through the window and stood out on the floor.

The marshal nudged Paul. A broad glare of light flooded the room, and at the same moment Marshal Gilbert cried sternly:

"Surrender, or we'll shoot you down!"

Startled into confusion by the sudden illumination of the room and the ominous command, the two robbers became panic-stricken, and made a dash for the window.

But the officer and Bolton were too quick for them. Their revolvers cracked simultaneously, and both men went down, badly wounded. After this their capture was easy, and they were soon disarmed and secured.

They were taken to jail, where their wounds were dressed, and when they finally recovered were sent to prison.

Paul, of course, recovered his money, but the members of the Building and Loan Association were so grateful for the valuable service he had rendered them that they clubbed together and paid up his mother's book for several months to come.

THE PLUMAGE HUNTER.

Not very long ago the writer accompanied a gold-mining expedition into the tropical forests of Guiana, and stumbled across an English traveler who was collecting birds for a London and Parisian firm of merchants. He was settled in a village of Acawois Indians, far from any of the haunts of the white man. Every male Indian of the village was in his service, and at the conclusion of each week they received pay, according to results, in cheap knives, powder, hatchets, cooking utensils, et cetera; pay day being usually celebrated by a feast, in which all the men got fearfully intoxicated on a filthy compound called paiwarri.

We started out every morning immediately after breakfast. The Indians were armed with bows and arrows and blowpipes. The collector divided them into sections, and sent them off into the bush, himself accompanying one group, but without doing any shooting. I fastened on to a man and a boy, and kept close in their wake all day. With the skill of a denizen of the woods, my man did not walk a step without rousing a feathered creature of some sort. Sometimes a large bird—a toucan or a macaw—would flap clumsily out of a bush, and the twang of the bowstring would announce its death. Small birds fluttered across our path constantly, and these were promptly brought down with the pipe. Now and then a flight of a score or two would suddenly settle all over in the branches about our heads, and on these occasions the Indian managed to kill a dozen or so before they appeared to realize their danger. It was kill, kill, kill, without a moment's pause. As the birds fell, the boy secured the bodies and dropped them into a long wicker basket, which was strapped across his forehead and hung down his back.

On our return to the village the men were coming in and emptying their baskets onto a long table in the middle of the Englishman's hut. Many of the birds were of the most brilliant plumage; but there were hundreds of birds, not boasting any brightness of color, that were of no use. The slaughter, in fact, is much greater in regard to the birds that are not wanted than those which reach the English market. The collector, stripped to the shirt, and with his sleeves rolled up, set to work at once, going through the game. He handled every bird, dropping those pretty enough for a bonnet or valuable enough for a collection into one heap, and the useless ones into another. Not more than one bird in ten was retained; the rest had been slaughtered uselessly. When I reproached my friend with this wanton waste of feathered life, he replied that he could not attempt to kill the birds himself, and it was impossible to get Indians to discriminate between valuable and worthless specimens.

JOKES FROM JERROLD.

Douglas Jerrold, once the keenest of wits, a remarkable combination of Thackeray and Hood, is now almost forgotten. It is a pity. His jests were singularly ripe and racy. He had no mercy on the sentimentalists.

"I love nature," said one of these dawdles to him one day. "I often take a book, retire into some unfrequented field, lie down, gaze on the heavens, then study. If there are any animals in the field, so much the better. The cow approaches, and looks down upon me; and I—I look up to her."

"Exactly," said Jerrold, "you look up to her with a filial smile!"

A delightful way of telling him he was a calf.

Another sentimentalist got a beautiful settler in this way: Walking in the country, Jerrold and a small party of friends stopped to notice the antics of a small donkey in a field. A gushing poet in the party said:

"Dear little thing; how I should like to buy it and give it to my mother!"

"Do," said Jerrold—"do, and tie this sweet motto round its neck: 'When this you see, remember me.'"

He had little mercy for pretentious prigs, who always abound in "literary circles." A young author had written on the same subject as Lamartine, and bragged of it.

"Ah," said he, "Lamartine and I row in the same boat."

"Yes," said Jerrold, "but not with the same skulls."

Another of these gentry, praising one of his own plays, said to Jerrold:

"Do you remember the baroness in that play?"

"Oh, yes," said Jerrold. "I never read anything of yours without being struck with its barrenness!"

At the same time he always had a friendly hand for a man who was too hard hit. A newspaper called the *Chronicle*, once attacked a young friend of his, savagely assailing his work. Jerrold took up the cudgels and wrote in his defense. He began by telling how, in some countries, the too luxuriant growth of the vine is prevented by sending asses in to crop the rising shoots. Then he gravely added:

"Even so young authors require pruning; and how thankful we all ought to be that the *Chronicle* keeps an ass!"

Walking one day in the Haymarket, then a rather disreputable promenade, some one met him, and thus accosted him:

"What, Jerrold, you here? Looking about for characters, I suppose."

"Yes," said Jerrold quietly; "I am told a good many are lost about here."

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Michigan on Gridiron.

Six of the eight games which will make up the University of Michigan's 1915 football schedule were announced recently by the board in control of the athletics. The midweek games have not yet been decided upon.

The schedule follows:

October 9, Mount Union; October 16, Case; October 23, Michigan Agricultural College; October 30, Syracuse; November 6, Cornell; November 13, Pennsylvania at Philadelphia.

With the exception of the Pennsylvania game on Franklin Field, Michigan will fight all her battles on the home gridiron next fall.

Hen and High-bred Chickens.

A hen of high-flying propensities advertised her character when a barred Plymouth Rock, the property of Mr. Gushee, of Hastings, N. Y., announced from a cedar tree on the Longue Vue estate, that she had a remarkable secret to impart.

Those who answered the frenzied squawks for aid found with her a brood of thirteen chicks. M. C. Cronin, who superintends the poultry stock at Longue Vue, removed the flock from the tree crotch, which was twenty feet from the ground, and installed the family in a comfortable house. The hen had been missing for days, but no one thought to look for her at such a height. Now they are trying to decide whether the birds are cedar birds or plain chickens.

Destroying Odor of Smoke.

A new invention is a lamp which consumes smoke. It resembles an ordinary alcohol lamp in appearance. At the tip of its burner is a piece of platinum. When the platinum is made to glow by the alcohol flame arising from the burner it gives off formaldehyde in great quantities. This overcomes the smoke or any other impurity in the atmosphere. When the lamp is lighted in a room where smoking is in progress it prevents the accumulation of stale smoke. It can also be used as a disinfector.

Ex-slave Ill at 102.

Mrs. Minerva Gillies, whose father, Richard Washington, was George Washington's slave, was taken to the Harlem Hospital, in New York recently, suffering from ailments that come with old age. She is 102 years old, and lived with her daughter at 58 West 133d Street.

Richard Washington was a stableboy at Mount Vernon. After the death of George Washington, he was sold and went to Petersburg, Va. There Minerva was born. She remained in slavery until the end of the Civil War, when she came North.

From Gate to President.

At a meeting of the directors of Yale & Towne, of Stamford, Conn., the largest hardware manufacturing concern in the country, if not in the world, Walter C. Allen, who twenty-three years ago applied for a job at the gate of the works, was elected president in the place of Henry R. Towne, who retires after forty-six years in that position.

Mr. Towne was made chairman of the board of directors.

Death Takes Four of Family.

For the first time in the history of Loganville, Ga., according to the older inhabitants, four deaths occurred in one family within four days. Edgar Rickets, who lives about four miles west of the place, experienced this affliction recently.

On a Monday he attended the funeral of his mother. That night his baby died, and the next day his wife and little boy, about two years old, also died, all being victims of pneumonia fever. The three bodies were buried Wednesday in a local cemetery. This is the first time that a triple funeral has ever occurred from one family in this section.

Dog Rescues an Old Soldier.

Wanderer, a smart collie, is being showered with attention as a hero in Woodside, Md., for saving from death Charles McCallion, an aged veteran of the Civil War. "Wan," as the dog is commonly known, is owned by Edson B. Olds, treasurer of the Union Trust Company.

Mr. Olds' attention was attracted to the continuous barking and peculiar antics of the dog on Sunday morning. Wan would dash up to the house and bark for a few minutes, then run to a field near by and bark again.

When Mr. Olds followed Wan on one of the trips, he found McCallion lying in the middle of the field, unconscious from the cold. A physician was summoned, and the aged veteran was taken to the Soldiers' Hospital. He will recover.

Ding Dong! Go Bells for Wong Chungs.

Mr. Wong Chung, late of China, whose head is said to be worth $10,000 to certain bloodthirsty officials of his native land, and Mrs. Chung Fong, more recently of the Celestial republic, who has traveled 10,000 miles to wed the political refugee with the precious cranium, were married in New York recently at the First Chinese Presbyterian Church by the Reverend Huie Kin.

The flavor of romance which one might expect from the above was absent at the ceremony. Mr. Chung is tall and thin, with the face of a student. He was attired in the official gala dress of the new republic, which consists of gray trousers, Prince Albert, high collar, and ascot tie. His bride, who is a slim, elderly lady, with gold-rimmed spectacles, wore a native Chinese costume of white silk, with a loose tunic effect and a short white veil. She bought this just before she set out in search of the prospective husband, whom she had not seen in ten years.

Many of the élite of the Chinese colony, which is not to be confused with Chinatown, witnessed the ceremony. Miss Fun Hin Liu, a Wellesley graduate, was the bridesmaid, and Mr. Ie Lam, a student from Columbia, was best man. After the ceremony, which was the simple Presbyterian ritual, delivered in English by the pastor of

the church, Professor Ou, of the Canton Chinese College, made singing noises while the newly married pair had their pictures taken.

Mrs. Fong met her husband ten years ago while he was serving as dean of the Canton Christian College. Since then the two have kept up a correspondence, which grew so ardent on his side that it finally lured Mrs. Fong across the Pacific and to Chicago, where her husband-to-be met her and brought her to New York.

Starved, Fight for Food.

Owing to the extended shutdown of the mines in Venetia, a small mining town in Washington County, Pa., 480 persons, including many women and children, are slowly starving to death. This message was received in a letter sent to a local newspaper. Barks and herbs are the only food that the starving people can obtain, and the pangs of hunger have so affected many that they fight one another for the bark and herbs that can be found in the fields and woods.

New Flag for Marshall.

Vice President Marshall is the first vice president of the United States to have a naval flag all his own. The necessity for the creation of such an ensign was brought about by the intended visit of Mr. Marshall, as the president's representative to the Panama-Pacific Exposition at San Francisco.

When the vice president determined to go, and arrangements for his reception were in progress, the navy department found that, while the president and the secretary and assistant secretary of the navy each had a flag, the vice president had none. The duty of providing a vice president's flag proved simple. The new banner will be the reverse of the president's flag in the color distribution. It will be of white, with the arms of the United States—a spread eagle bearing on its breast a shield of stars and stripes. The eagle will be of blue and the shield in red, white, and blue.

J. B. Brady Aids Woman.

James B. Brady, noted as "Diamond Jim," while sitting as a member of the New York grand jury, was so touched by the story of one of the witnesses that he suggested taking up a collection for her. Just to start things off, he tossed a brand-new one-hundred-dollar bill on the stenographer's table, and when the other jurors had added their contributions, there was $130 in the purse.

Mrs. Marka Buila, of 1324 First Avenue, was the woman whose plight touched Mr. Brady's heart. She told the jury that she had been robbed of all her money, jewelry, and clothing, and when she was summoned to testify last Monday, had to walk to the Criminal Courts Building from her home in Harlem.

The man against whom the woman was testifying was indicted.

Army of Institutions.

Charitable, civic, and religious organizations exceeding 3,800 are working for the betterment of people and things in New York City, according to the directory issued by the Charity Organization Society.

There are 1,800 churches. Social centers and settlements, 150 in Manhattan and forty-one in the other boroughs, lead the remainder of the list, which includes hospitals, kindergartens, homes, nurseries, and missionary societies. Included in the directory are the names of twelve war-relief bodies. About 6,000 persons are associated with charitable agencies.

Anarchist Plot Revealed.

One of the exhibits at the next county fair in Metuchen, N. J., will be a prize Jersey anarchist, guaranteed to give results any place at any time.

A farm where anarchists will be reared in proper anarchistic atmosphere was purchased recently by a man who said he was Harry Kelly, chairman of the Ferrer Settlement, of New York City. He bought the sixty-nine-acre farm of Walter Rush, in Raritan Township, where, he declared, the headquarters of the Ferrer School will be established about May 1st.

"Our main object," he said, "in establishing the colony is to produce genuine anarchists, and we must rear our children in a thoroughly anarchistic atmosphere."

The plot will be cut up into building lots. To each anarchist will be given one plot, upon which he is expected to sow the seeds of anarchy, tomatoes, and turnips. Kelly says the settlement will be the anarchist headquarters in the East.

This town is all excited. It remembers with painful distinctness what happened four years ago, when the socialists established a colony near the site of the contemplated anarchist farm. Professor George D. Herron and Eugene V. Debs took the leading part in the formation of the socialist pasture ground.

Nobody took more than the usual curious interest in the project until the announcement seeped into this town that Herron was going to bring Miss Carrie Rand to live with him "according to the new and simple form of marriage ceremony."

Metuchen isn't exactly puritan, but when that news reached it, every Metuchenite dug his Bible out of the attic and joined his neighbor in excited protest. Metuchen was willing to tolerate some things, but when it came to winking at free love, never!

So highly excited did the townsfolk become that Herron and his wife left for Florence, Italy, where they lived until her death a year ago. And even though the socialist farm was established, nothing that resembled free love ever made its appearance.

That's why Metuchen sizzles with palpitating expectation and teems with a throbbing skepticism. It knows what the I. W. W. folk have done in Paterson, another Jersey town, and it has read what the anarchists in New York are reputed to have done.

Metuchen was able to repel the socialists when they would have set up a free-love colony in the neighborhood. But it is not so sure that it can stand off genuine anarchists.

Rowing Dates for Year.

In addition to the announcement on Saturday night that the championship meet of the National Association of Amateur Oarsmen would be held at Springfield, Mass., on August 13th and 14th, the following rowing dates were made public by the Amateur American Rowing Association:

May 22—American Rowing Association, at Philadelphia; May 31—New York Rowing Association, on the Harlem River, New York; June 19—Schuylkill Navy Regatta, at

Philadelphia; July 3—Hudson River Rowing Association meet; July 5—People's regatta, at Philadelphia; New England regatta, at Charles Basin, Boston; Western Massachusetts Rowing Association, at Springfield, Mass.; Rosedale Boat Club open regatta, on Hackensack River, New Jersey; September 6—Middle States Rowing Association, meet date not yet fixed; New England Rowing Association regatta, at Boston; Detroit River Rowing Association, at Detroit; September 9 to 15—Pacific Coast Association meet at Pan-American Fair, San Francisco; September 15—Detroit River Rowing Association, at Detroit.

Reduce World Armies Plan.

A movement to bring about a world-wide restriction of armies and navies by international agreement after the European War is ended is announced by the American League to Limit Armaments. The crusade is being organized through conferences and correspondence with leaders of public opinion in several foreign countries, it was stated.

"We are undertaking to solidify the movement and coordinate the efforts along this line while the war is still in progress, in order to make the strongest possible presentation of the issue at the earliest opportune moment," says the league's announcement. "We are not proposing methods to bring peace to Europe until Europe is ready to stop fighting of its own accord. We stand by what we hold to be the main proposition—that the reduction of all armaments to the least proportions consistent with the demands of normal tranquility and the use of the money now going into destructive engines of war for the constructive agencies of peace is the true solution of the peace problem."

To Sell a Pilgrim's House.

The only remaining house in America which has sheltered persons who came to Plymouth on the *Mayflower* in 1620 is to be sold at auction by order of the court.

The house was built in 1666 by a son of John Howland, the last *Mayflower* survivor. In course of time the building fell into decay, but upon the organization in 1911 of the Society of the Descendants of Pilgrim John Howland of the ship *Mayflower*, the property was acquired and restored by that body.

Lieutenant Shares Meal with Private.

Some excitement was created in a Piccadilly grill at luncheon time when a private English "Tommy" walked in and sat down at a table with a young lieutenant. The private is the young officer's father, and before the war held a high position in a London bank. His lunching with the officer caused some discussion, and some said it was too much democracy even for the English army.

After the meal the young officer said: "Should you refuse to let the governor buy you a lunch merely because he is a Tommy?"

Skipper of Six-master at Twenty-one.

Shortly after the *E. K. Sterling*, the only six-masted barkentine in the world, arrived in San Francisco, Cal., from Nanaimo, B. C., laden with coal, she was boarded by Federal operatives, who made a thorough search of the hold for a high-power wireless apparatus which officials have been informed is destined to be transferred at sea to a foreign warship from some American vessel in the near future. No apparatus was found.

Captain Edward Sterling, junior, son of the owner of the *E. K. Sterling*, is only twenty-one years old, and is said to be the youngest skipper of a deep-water ship to possess a master's license. The vessel requires a crew of only twelve men, as her sails are raised by donkey engines.

Canary Sings in Trenches.

A private of the English Second Rifle Brigade, writing to a friend at Sheffield, England, tells this story of a canary which he says sings and cheers his comrades through the smoke of battle:

"Our only companion—in the trenches—is a little canary we rescued from a deserted house, which had been almost shelled to atoms. On the cage was a ticket: 'Please look after this little bird.' It has made itself quite at home with us. When we leave the trenches, we hand it over to the next regiment. So you may guess it's made quite a fuss of. Last time we went into the trenches our canary was almost black through the smoke from shell fire, but it seems as cheerful as ever. Really, it gets so black with smoke that it's a job to distinguish it from a sparrow."

Dickens is German Soldiers' Favorite.

Dickens is the German soldiers' favorite novelist. He stands first in a list of fifty authors prepared by the great publishing house of Reclam, of Leipzig, famous for its cheap reprints.

Of the total number of orders from the German troops at the front forty-eight per cent calls for fiction, nineteen per cent for serious reading, comprising philosophy, religion, and arts; seventeen per cent for poetry and drama, and sixteen per cent for light miscellaneous stuff, including humorous works.

The German soldier is catholic in his taste when it comes to fiction, for not only does he top his list with Dickens, but includes twenty-one other foreign novelists, among whom appear Bulwer, Defoe, Scott, Dumas, Daudet, Merimée, Prevost, and Victor Hugo.

Forests Fired by Sparks.

Of the 503 fires reported by the United States Forest Service as having occurred in 1914 in the national forest purchase areas in the White Mountains of New England and the Southern Appalachians, 319, or sixty per cent, were caused by sparks from locomotives. More than half of these fires, or 272, occurred in Virginia alone, and of these 227 were from locomotive sparks.

Three hundred and seventy-nine of the fires were confined to areas of less than ten acres each, and 296 were put out before a quarter of an acre had been burned. The total loss amounted to $2,192, and the cost of fire fighting to $1,300, an infinitesimal sum compared with the value of the timber and reproduction protected. As the areas swept by fire were mostly cut over, the greater part of the damage was suffered by young growth.

Expert Stump Blower Has Narrow Escape.

Jake Bodine, prominent tailor and stump blower of Kenton, Ohio, sat at his case and smoked his pipe.

When it went out, he lighted it again. When it went out a second time, he decided he had had enough, and laid the pipe aside.

He had been blowing stumps with dynamite during the day, and had brought four large caps home in his pocket.

Reaching into his pocket in which he had put the caps, and in which he carried his smoking tobacco as well, he found three caps instead of four.

When he emptied the ashes from his pipe in search of the fourth cap, that fourth cap rattled out, badly scorched.

"It's a good thing my pipe went out when it did," he says. "If that cap had gone off, like as not it would have ruined one of the best stump blowers in Kenton."

Killed Nineteen California Lions.

Nineteen California lions fell before the guns of the bounty hunters in February. Four were killed in Humboldt County; three in Siskiyou; three in Lake; two in Mendocino; two in Ventura, and one each in San Benito, Del Norte, Monterey, Tehama, and Tuolumne. The State paid twenty dollars to each successful hunter, and in addition to this the pelts brought as much more. Some counties also give a special bounty for lions' scalps.

Officers Applaud New Box Wireless.

Under the direction of the secretary of war a new wireless apparatus, the invention of Doctor Otto F. Reinhold, of 77 Nye Avenue, Newark, N. J., was tested at Bedloe's Island by First Lieutenant J. G. Taylor, of the Signal Corps, and M. B. Dilley, master signal electrician. The government men declared afterward that the apparatus gave promise of revolutionizing the entire system of wireless telegraphy.

The apparatus, inclosed in a box about fifteen inches long, six inches wide, and eight inches high, may be styled a secret radio plant, and is intended primarily for use in the army field. The astounding feature of it, according to Lieutenant Taylor, is that it was fully demonstrated that the little contrivance sends out its sound waves without antennæ.

The experiment enabled the government officials to communicate with Fort Totten, about fifteen miles away in one direction, and Fort Hancock, about twenty miles distant in another. The navy-yard wireless station called a halt on the tests as the inventor was about to try to reach Fort H. G. Wright, one hundred and twenty miles away, at New London, Conn.

Doctor Reinhold said his apparatus could be connected wherever direct or alternating current is available. He said it could be used on an automobile and operated while the machine was at top speed by using current supplied from the automobile dynamo.

The inventor claimed for his apparatus that in a recent test he sent a message three hundred miles.

Echoes of War in London Want Ads.

Want advertisements are always interesting because of the varied and intimate side lights which they give on what people are doing and thinking about. As war topics fill the news and editorial columns of the English newspapers, so is the war the all-absorbing subject in the classified department. Following are a few of the advertisements appearing in the London *Times*, sent to the *Blade* by Mr. Boyce as showing how England is taking the war:

Dogs and cats of the empire!—The kaiser said: "Germany will fight to last dog and cat." Will British dogs and cats give 6d. each to provide Y. M. C. A. soldiers' hut at front? Any dog or cat sending five pounds can have his or her picture hung in "our" hut.—"Tom," care of Miss Maud Field, Mortimer West, Berks.

Request from sailors and soldiers at the front to send large consignments of flint and tinder lighters; matches, when procurable, being unreliable in wet weather. Money to help purchase direct from makers solicited.—Address Haden Crawford, esquire, Marlow, Bucks.

Ninth Seaforth Highlanders.—Field glasses are required for the use of N. C. O.'s and scouts, and will be gratefully received and acknowledged by Captain Petty, Salamanca Barracks, Aldershot.

Playing Cards (used) urgently required for wounded soldiers.—Gratefully received by Miss Peck, Maidencombe, St. Mary Church, Devon.

Urgently needed, socks for the Eighth Irish Service Battalion, King's Liverpool regiment, shortly leaving for the front.—Gratefully acknowledged by Miss Cox, The Priory, Royston, Herts.

Elizabeth Motor Ambulance.—Will every one named "Elizabeth" in Great Britain and Ireland send me contribution toward above—in connection with Lady Bushman's Ambulance Fleet—and save our soldiers much unnecessary suffering?—Mrs. F. Ford, Rushmere, Wimbledon Common, S. W.

Wounded Soldiers "Margaret" Fund.—"Lady Margarets" subscribe a guinea. "Margarets" over sixteen, half guinea; "Little Margarets," 2s. 6d. Lady Margaret Hospital, Bromley, Kent. Lady Margaret Campbell, Hon. Treasurer.

Loses Leg After Fifty Years.

Fifty years after a Confederate shell had struck and injured his right leg, Ellet Ramsey, of Huntingdon, Pa., had the leg removed at the Blair Hospital. The amputation was made necessary by suffering from the old wound received half a century ago. He stood the operation well and will recover.

Angry Lamb Injures Woman.

Mrs. Garret Smith, of Liberty, Pa., is suffering from severe injuries received by being butted by an angry lamb. Dan Carroll, a neighbor of the Smith family, is the owner of the lamb, which escaped from its premises and went into the Smith yard. Before Mrs. Smith realized what had happened, she was knocked to the ground and seriously injured, one of her arms being broken.

Lost Boys Found in Abandoned Mine.

After searching a week for two small boys who were missing from their homes during that time, the searchers found the body of William Hale, five years old, and his companion, Albert Tomlinson, aged ten, still alive, in an abandoned mine near Banksville, Pa. The boys had been lost in the mine all that time. Young Tomlinson was almost exhausted from exposure and hunger.

The boys were in a small five-foot drop in a mine pit which had several inches of water in it. The body of the Hale boy was partly submerged in the water, but his head was resting in the lap of his companion, who could barely sit erect. The younger boy had starved to death.

After searching for several days for the missing lads, the party entered the mine pit. They had progressed only a short distance when they heard a faint voice cry-

ing: "Oh, Thomas; oh, Thomas!" It was young Tomlinson calling for his older brother.

When rescued, young Tomlinson said: "Thank God you found us."

Tomlinson told an incoherent story. He said he had no idea of time, but as nearly as he could tell Hale had been dead about two days. He said they walked hand in hand many miles, endeavoring to find a way out. After his comrade died, Tomlinson said, he carried the body around with him. Overcome with exhaustion, he gave up all efforts and had not sufficient strength to get out of the pool of poisonous water in which he and Hale's body was found.

It is not known how the Tomlinson boy survived the ordeal, but it is supposed that he subsisted on bark from old timber in the mine. He is in a hospital now.

Catches Baby Boy on Roof of Moving Train.

An escape from death without precedent occurred in Pittsburgh, recently, on the Pennsylvania Railroad. Walter Betle, four years old, was playing on the bridge at Thirty-third Street, near where the flooring was being repaired. He stumbled at a hole and started to fall to the tracks, twenty-five feet below.

A freight train was within a few feet of the bridge, running at high speed. On the roof of the first box car was Richard Roundtree, a brakeman, saw the boy stumble through the bridge. He braced himself and managed to catch him as he fell. Roundtree staggered dangerously near the edge of the roof, but managed to keep his footing until the train was stopped.

Has Wonderful "Peace" Egg.

Sam Marks' Plymouth Rock hen, of Orville, Cal., which recently laid an egg bearing the Hebrew word for "peace" neatly inscribed thereon, is bringing her owner much fame and large daily mail. The president of the Panama-Pacific Exposition has written to Marks, inclosing a free pass to the exposition and asking Marks to bring the wonderful egg and "Martha," the remarkable hen, with him.

Lands 975 War Horses Across Ocean Safely.

Doctor E. R. Forbes, of Fort Worth, Texas, who, early in January, resigned as State veterinarian to return to British service, recently took the record on animal transportation, having landed in Europe 975 head of animals without losing one.

Doctor Forbes was in good health when the letter containing the news of his safe arrival at his destination in England was written, and signified his intention of remaining in the animal-transport service of Great Britain as long as his services were required during the war.

Doctor Forbes was employed by the British government during the Boer War in the same position he now occupies. At that time he took two cargoes of horses from New Orleans to South Africa, and, after demonstrating how to care for the animals on shipboard during such a long voyage, returned to New Orleans, where he continued to pass upon the soundness and stamina of horses and mules for the British army while the Boer War lasted.

Taking 975 head of animals across the Atlantic in midwinter was a feat in maritime equine transportation never before equaled, and especially when it is taken into consideration that not an animal was lost during the voyage.

This is quite in contradistinction to the fate of a shipload of horses consigned to the Italian government by the steamer *Evelyn*. When the steamer neared the Bermuda Islands, the condenser on the vessel broke, and, no water being available, the cargo, 366 head, was driven into the sea.

Another shipment to Italy arrived at its destination with only seventy-eight alive out of 345 when the vessel left an American port.

Michigan Has Climbing Cow.

Marshall Rust, a farmer, of Lapeer, Mich., possesses several cows that are as graceful examples of bovine femininity as ever chewed a cud, but, in addition, one of them has some athletic ability.

Mr. Rust recently turned his cows into a field in which was also a wagon partly loaded with bean pods. One night he went out to milk his cows just after darkness had set in, and found one missing. He searched over the near-by fields for several hours, but to no avail.

When morning came, the lost cow was found sleeping peacefully on the load of bean pods. The cow had climbed on the wagon, six feet from the ground.

Timber Inspector Slays Three Bears.

Mat Jordan, expert timber inspector, living in Turner, Mich., is the hero of the hour just now in that town and vicinity. Old residents, especially those who came from the East many years ago, declare that if Mat had lived in the good old pioneer days of which J. Fenimore Cooper so charmingly wrote, Mat would have made as interesting a story hero as did Natty Bumpo, the famous deer slayer, only Mat's long suit is bears, no matter how many.

Mat was strolling through the woods near here with a double-bladed ax on his shoulder. He was there to look over some timber land, with a prospective dicker looming up in his speculative mind. While pausing to inspect a likely looking log that lay half concealed with dead brush, he heard a noise. Stepping toward the sound to investigate, he beheld a large black bear emerging from its den.

"Great siege guns!" exclaimed Mat, "this looks like war."

It was war, and it started rght away, for Mat swung his double-edged ax and soon had the enemy at his feet, registering its final kicks and last gasps. While he was surveying his conquered foe with a gleam of triumph in his weather eye, he suddenly had occasion to exclaim:

"Well, for the love of Mike, look who's here!"

Two more bears, but young, half-grown ones, which were quickly dispatched and laid alongside their mother. The large bear weighed 175 pounds.

Mat went after help, and the carcasses were brought to town, where they were viewed by hundreds of persons, all of whom were of the opinion that Mat Jordan is the champion bear slayer of Michigan.

Strangest Fresh-water Fish.

George Welscher, who lives in Illinois, opposite Commerce, Mo., caught a strange-looking fish in the Mississippi River the other day. He had been told that if one would break the ice near the shore and drop a baited hook in the water, he could sure catch fish. He decided to try it, and had only been fishing a few minutes when he landed a queer specimen, to describe it mildly. It had

a head like a dog's, but the body was like a fish. Where the fins should be it had something like wings, which it could open and close. It had a tail similar to a cat's, with fur on it like a cat's, and on which the water seemed to have no effect.

Near the end of the tail there were three prongs, each having a different color of fur on them—one blue, one white, and the other a shade of yellow. It had a tusk about two inches long in its mouth. Its eyes were in the tip of its tail, and instead of having two eyes, it had three. Welscher said he had no trouble landing the fish, and as soon as landed it began to bark like a dog.

Saved Russian from Big Bear.

Andy Williams, an employee of the Gagen Lumber and Cedar Company, of Gagen, Wis., in one of their camps, two miles from this village, killed what is thought to be the largest bear ever seen in this vicinity, it weighing nearly 500 pounds.

A Russian who was swamping out logs suddenly aroused a monster bear, and, in his excitement, accidentally hit bruin on the head. The bear, furious at being struck, made for the Russian, who was now fleeing down the road at his utmost speed. The Russ no doubt imagined that his end was near and that there was at least one Russian who would never get back across the big pond to face a German gun. He probably never would have if Andy Williams hadn't come to his rescue and dispatched the bear with an ax.

They went back and found three cubs in a hollow log, and they are now getting the best of care at the camp.

Tiny Locomotive is Wonder in Details.

A perfect model of an oil-burning railway locomotive, forty-two inches long, is to be put on exhibition at the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Arthur H. Johnson, of Seattle, Wash., who built the model, has been requested by the San Francisco authorities to enter the locomotive as an exhibit, and he has consented.

Johnson, who is a young electrician, spent three years in making the model to try out an invention of his on the fire box. The engine is equipped with air brakes, an electric-light system, and everything else that a modern locomotive has. The boiler has been tested out at 150 pounds working pressure.

A Massachusetts man has built a miniature battleship, thirteen feet in length, which has all the features of a real dreadnaught, including guns that fire, range finders, wireless instruments, gunners, and even a band that plays martial music. The vessel is propelled by electricity, and can make ten miles an hour in smooth water.

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Santa's Aids Honored.

A large statue of Santa Claus, made of paper pulp molded from five thousand letters written by poor children of the city to Kris Kingle, was presented at the Hotel Astor, in New York City, to William C. and F. A. Muschenheim, two of Santa's aids. It is the gift of the Santa Claus Association and the Waterman's Ideal Ten-year Club.

John D. Gluck, founder of the Santa Claus Association, presented the figure to the Muschenheims. The statue is three-quarters life size and rests on a base of Italian marble. Kratina, the sculptor, spent two months in molding it.

The inscription says the gift is in recognition of "assistance rendered to the children of the poor, who wrote to Santa Claus. A fortune was sent to poor kiddies, for fuel, food, and toys, and five thousand of them no longer say there is no Santa Claus."

Find Missing Man in Shark.

The mystery surrounding the disappearance three years ago at St. Augustine, Fla., of John B. Mooney, of Mooney Brothers' Company, was cleared up when his son, Edgar J. Mooney, of Cleveland, Ohio, received word from Miami, Fla., that the upper portion of a human skeleton, which is thought to be that of J. B. Mooney, had been found in the stomach of a shark caught near there this week.

In 1912 the elder Mooney was in bathing at St. Augustine when he suddenly disappeared in the surf. It was thought that a strong undertow had carried him out to sea, but it is now believed a shark seized him.

Interesting New Inventions.

The "bicycle built for two" about which there used to be a song was followed by the motor cycle carrying two passengers. This has now been improved upon. The newest kind has two chair seats, one behind the other, instead of saddles.

To save neckties from the wear and tear of pinholes, a scarfpin has been patented that clips on the edge of a tie.

In the interest of cleanliness, an Iowa inventor has patented a wire frame to hold a milk pail up from the ground.

A Frenchman has invented a machine for dealing cards that is said to make misdeals impossible.

A microthermometer has been invented that is so delicate that it is capable of registering sea-water temperature changes to one-thousandth of a degree. The instrument is intended to enable ship's officers to detect their approach to icebergs.

A novel wrench that will hold a nut of almost any size is made of a single piece of steel, the handle being split so that the jaws are sprung together as a strain is applied.

Snake Poison Fails to Cure.

Rattlesnake venom as a cure for epilepsy proved a failure in official tests conducted by the State of Kansas. A report filed in Chicago by Doctor M. L. Perry, superintendent of the State Hospital for Epileptics, at Parsons, notes the effect of the venom on six patients at the institution who received the treatment for two months.

"In two cases there were more attacks than before; another was unchanged, and one patient's condition grew so alarming that the treatment was discontinued in two weeks," the report says.

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